IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

International Students and Scholars Office

24-Month STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension

Updated: 5/26/2022

Agenda

- 24-Month STEM OPT Extension information
- Eligibility requirements
- Application process
- Application materials
- Sending STEM OPT application to USCIS
- Reporting Requirements during STEM OPT
- Travel

24-Month STEM OPT Extension Information

What is the STEM OPT Extension?

- Extension of Optional Practical Training for students who have completed a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) fields
- Allows students to continue engaging in practical experience that is directly related to their major after they complete their degree requirements
- Valid for 24 months (after initial 12 months of OPT)
- Benefit of F-1 status immediately following a period of post-completion OPT

STEM Extension Overview

- 24 month extension
- Two extensions in lifetime
  - The second extension must be at a higher level than the first
- Extension can be based on previous STEM degree
  - Must follow period of post-completion OPT
- Student and employer must complete Form I-983 Training Plan
- Application can reach USCIS:
  - No earlier than 90 days before OPT EAD end date
- Additional 60 days of unemployment

Resources

- isso.iastate.edu
  - F-1 Students
    - Optional Practical Training: Extension

STEM OPT Eligibility

Mandatory Degree Requirements

- Degree that is the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension must be:
  - At the Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral level
  - Listed on the STEM Designated Degree Program List
    - Based on the major CIP code

- Student is eligible immediately following post-completion OPT and after completing all course requirements
  - Excluding creative component/thesis/dissertation

Previous Degree Requirements

- The STEM OPT Extension may be based on a previously obtained STEM degree that was:
  - Conferred within the past 10 years
  - From a U.S. educational institution that is SEVP-certified
  - Included on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List

- Each degree may only be used once as the basis of a 24-Month STEM OPT extension

- Must be in a period of post-completion OPT when applying

- All requirements must be met at the time of the Designated School Official's (DSO) STEM OPT recommendation

Employment Requirements

- Employment on STEM OPT must be directly related to the STEM major
- Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify
- **Must be paid** employment for a **minimum of 20 hours** per week per employer
- Employee and employer must complete the Form I-983 Training Plan
  - Bona fide employer, employee relationship must exist
  - Employer agrees to report the termination or departure of a STEM OPT student to the DSO within 5 days of the termination or departure

Compensation and Time Requirements

- Pay must be commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer's similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment
- Required to work at least 20 hours per week for each employer
  - Excluding time off taken consistent with leave-related policies
- Not allowed to volunteer while on STEM OPT
- Must disclose any adjustments on an updated Form I-983

Form I-983, Training Plan

- Form I-983 is used to:
  - Identify goals for the STEM opportunity and specific knowledge, skills, and techniques that will be gained
  - Explain how goals will be achieved
  - Obtain a performance evaluation
  - Describe methods of oversight and supervision
  - Explain how the training is directly related to the student's qualifying STEM degree

- Completed Form I-983 must be submitted before the DSO may recommend an OPT Extension
  - ICE and/or USCIS may request a copy. Must be kept updated.

- New Form I-983 required when starting with a new employer or when changes are made
  - Student must submit a new Form I-983 within 10 days of change

Application Process

Application Timeline

- To be eligible for STEM OPT, the application:
  - **Must be received by USCIS no earlier than 90 days** before the end date of the post-completion OPT EAD
  - **Must be received and receipted by USCIS on or before the end date** of the post-completion OPT EAD

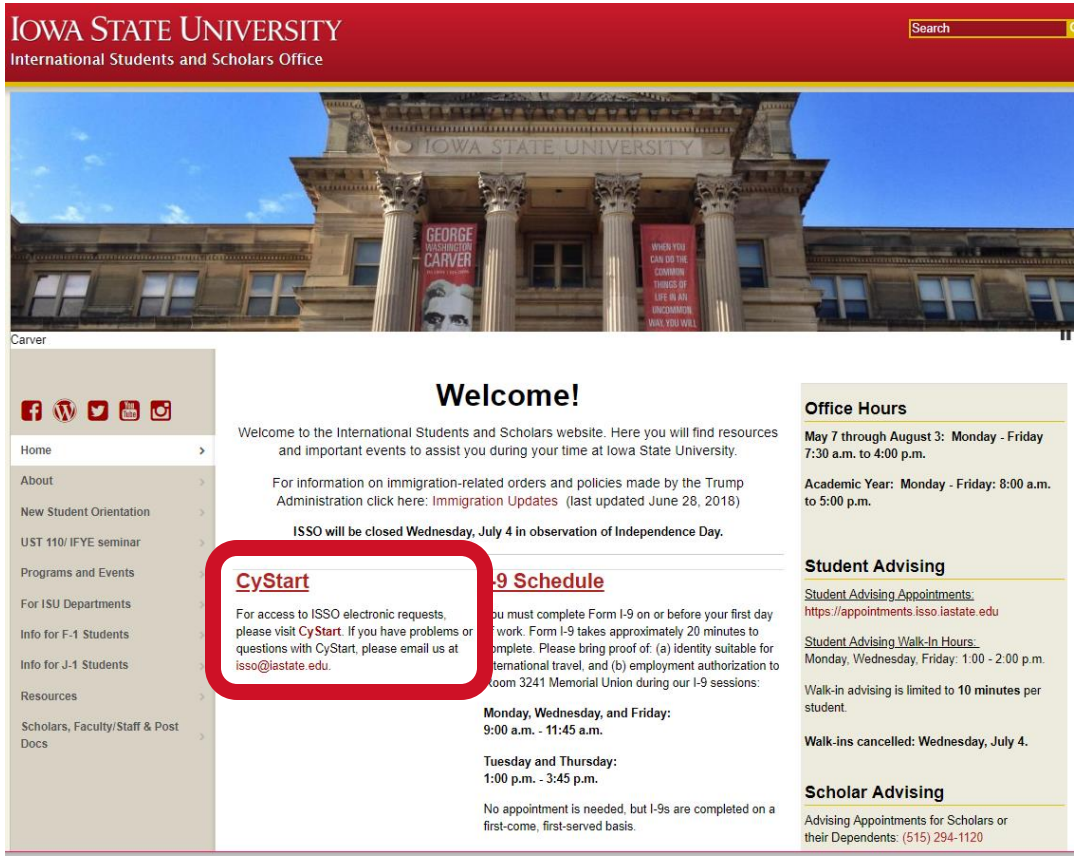
- USCIS may take over 90 days to process the application

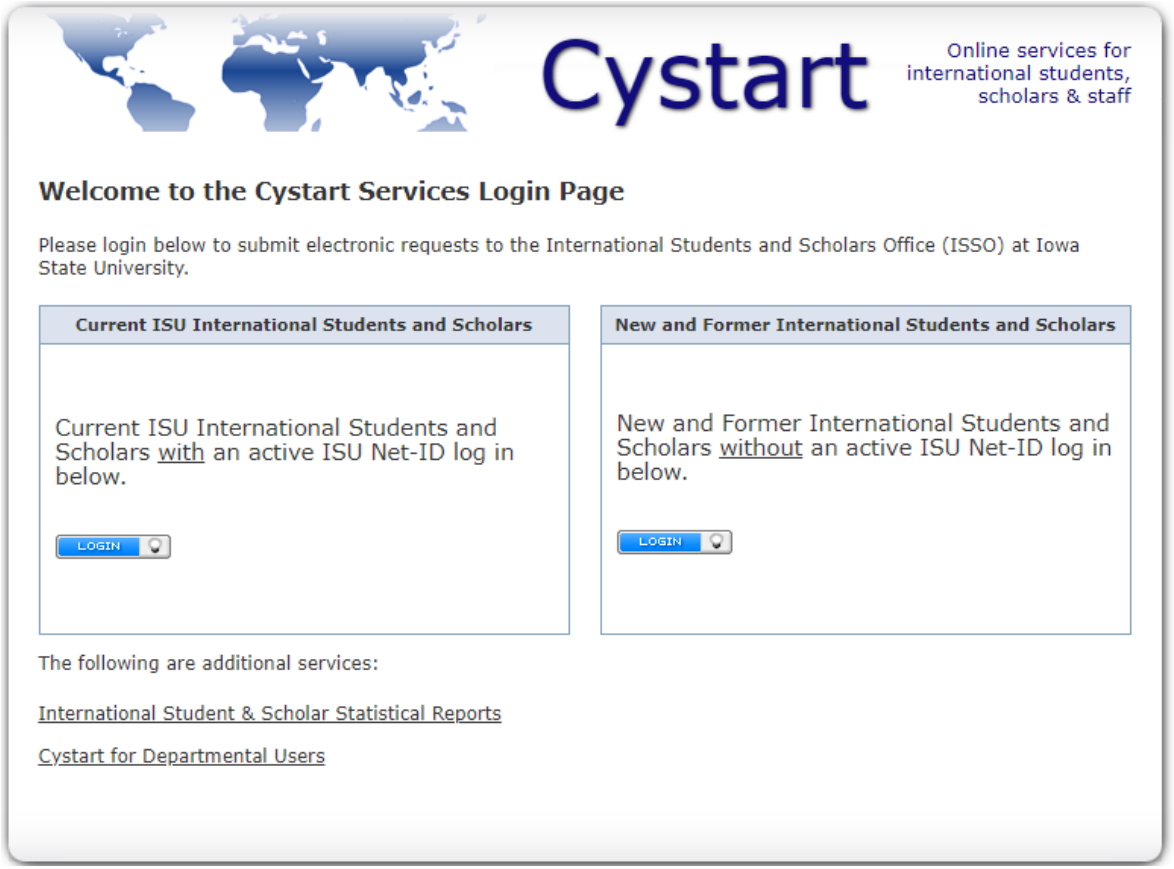
- If application is timely and properly filed, student may continue work for up to 180 days beyond the post-completion OPT end date while the application is pending
  - USCIS will issue a Receipt Notice which you may use to complete Form I-9 with your employer to authorize this 180 day period of employment

- Work performed after post-completion OPT EAD end date must be directly related to STEM degree used as the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT extension

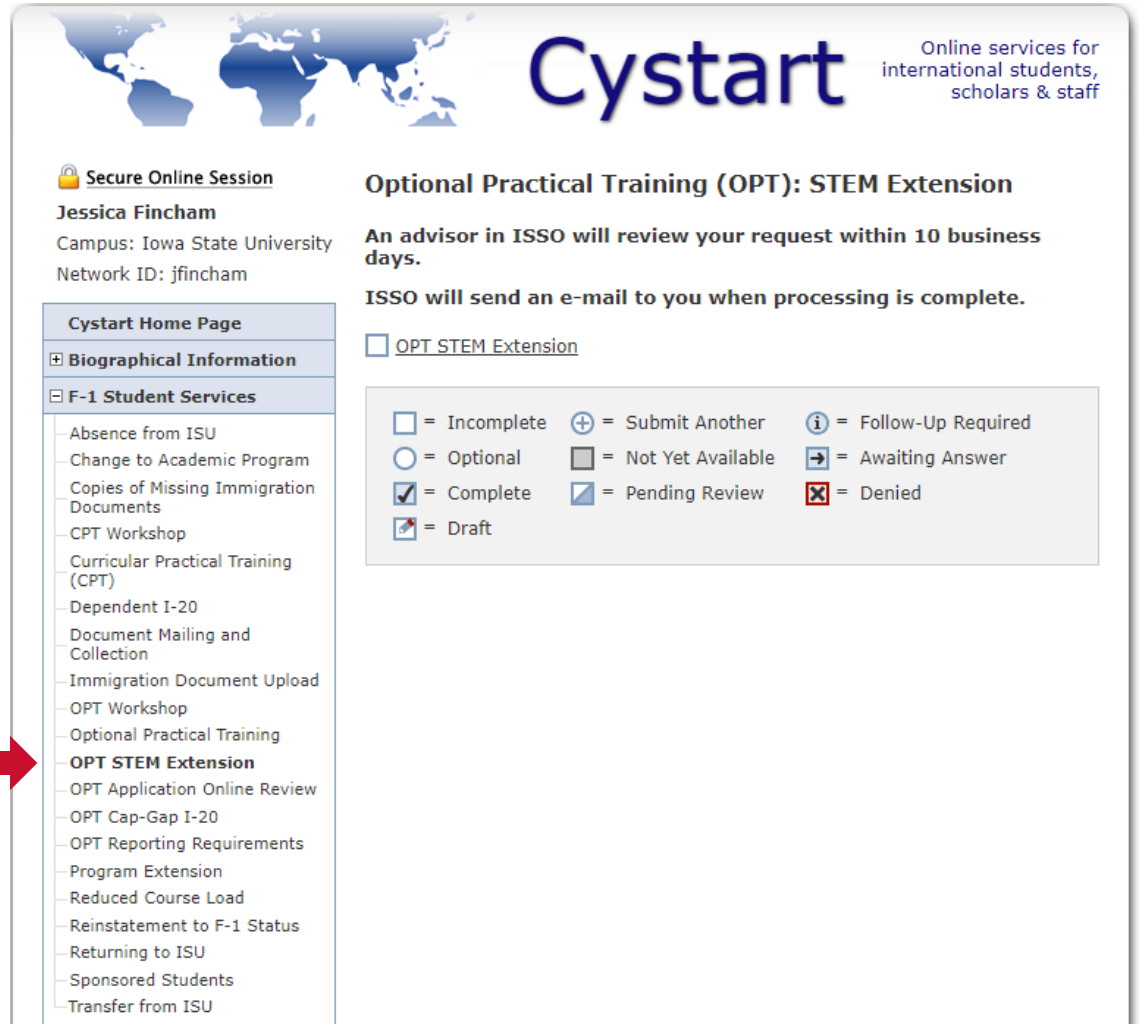
Submitting STEM OPT Request to ISSO Through CyStart

- To apply for STEM OPT, first request new I-20 by logging into CyStart through the ISSO website.





Submitting STEM OPT Request to ISSO Through CyStart



Collecting STEM OPT I-20

You will receive an email when your STEM OPT recommendation I-20 is ready to be collected from ISSO. The email will include information on:

- Document collection or document mailing
- Application timeline guidelines
- Review options and times
- Form I-765 feedback
- A list of required STEM OPT application materials
- Mailing your application to USCIS

Required 24-Month STEM OPT Application Documents

Required Application Materials

- Payment of $410
  - Check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, **or**
- Two U.S. passport photos taken within last 30 days (gently write SEVIS # on back)
- Form I-765, typed and signed in black ink
- Form G-1145, typed
- Most recent I-94 (Locate at cbp.gov/i94)
- Copy of passport identity page (and page with expiration date, if different)
- Copy of passport page with most recent F-1 visa
- Copy of previous OPT recommendation I-20s
- Copy of previous EADs (front and back) from USCIS
- Copy of official ISU transcript, which lists major and degree earned
- Copy of diploma (optional)
- Letter from employer verifying current employment and duties related to major & degree earned

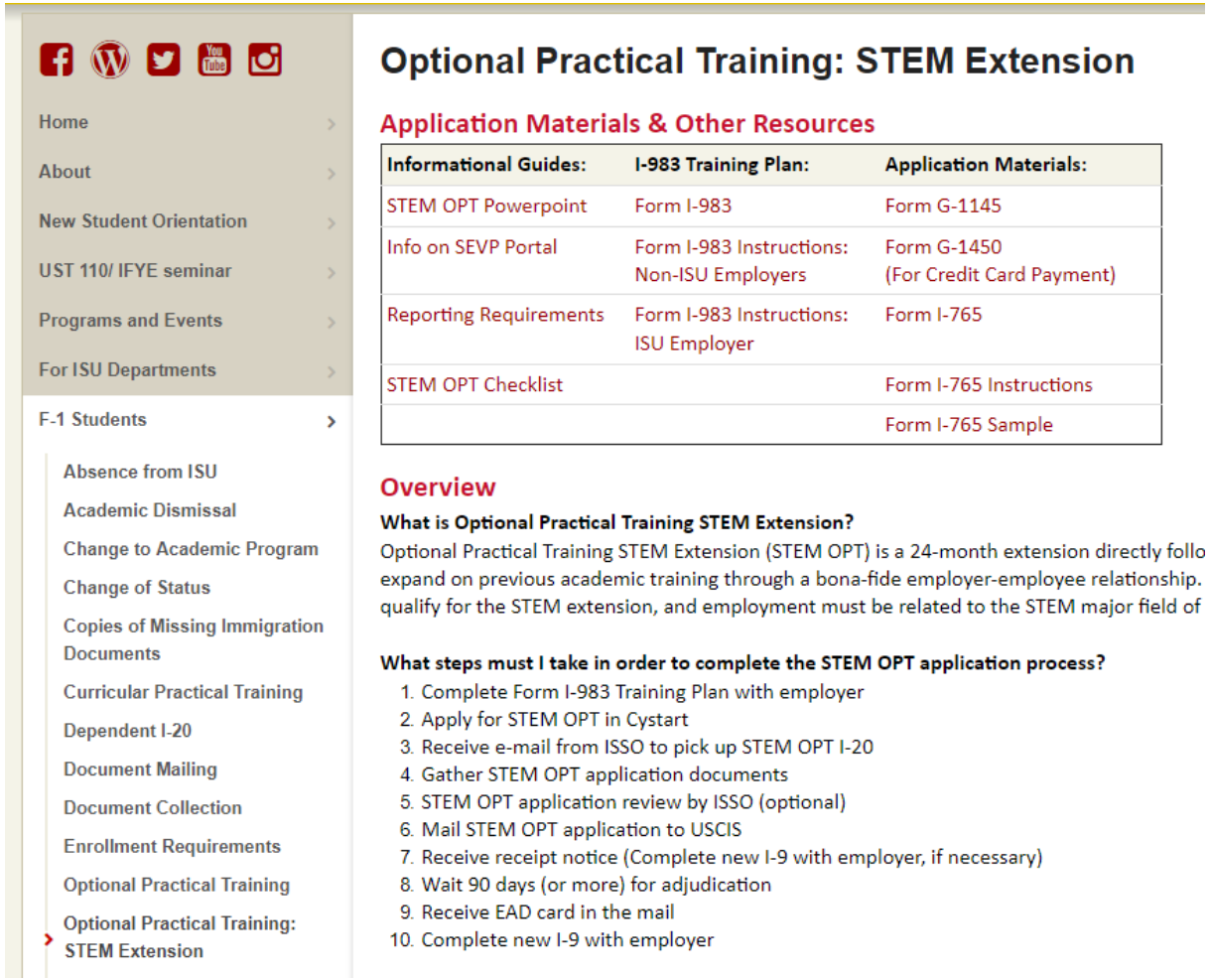
Payment

- Payment of $410
  - Check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, **or**
    - Write I-765 and your SEVIS number in the Memo section
    - If the address on your check is not current, cross off and write in correct address

Photos

- 2 color photos
  - Write SEVIS number lightly in black pen on the back of both pictures
- Taken within past **30 days**
- White or off-white background with no shadows
- U.S. quality passport photos

Form I-765: Sample and Template



- Home
- About
- New Student Orientation
- UST 110/ IFYE seminar
- Programs and Events
- For ISU Departments
- F-1 Students
  - Absence from ISU
  - Academic Dismissal
  - Change to Academic Program
  - Change of Status
  - Copies of Missing Immigration Documents
  - Curricular Practical Training
  - Dependent I-20
  - Document Mailing
  - Document Collection
  - Enrollment Requirements
  - Optional Practical Training
  - Optional Practical Training: STEM Extension

Optional Practical Training: STEM Extension

Application Materials & Other Resources

Informational Guides:	I-983 Training Plan:	Application Materials:
STEM OPT Powerpoint	Form I-983	Form G-1145
Info on SEVP Portal	Form I-983 Instructions: Non-ISU Employers	Form G-1450 (For Credit Card Payment)
Reporting Requirements	Form I-983 Instructions: ISU Employer	Form I-765
STEM OPT Checklist		Form I-765 Instructions
		Form I-765 Sample

Overview

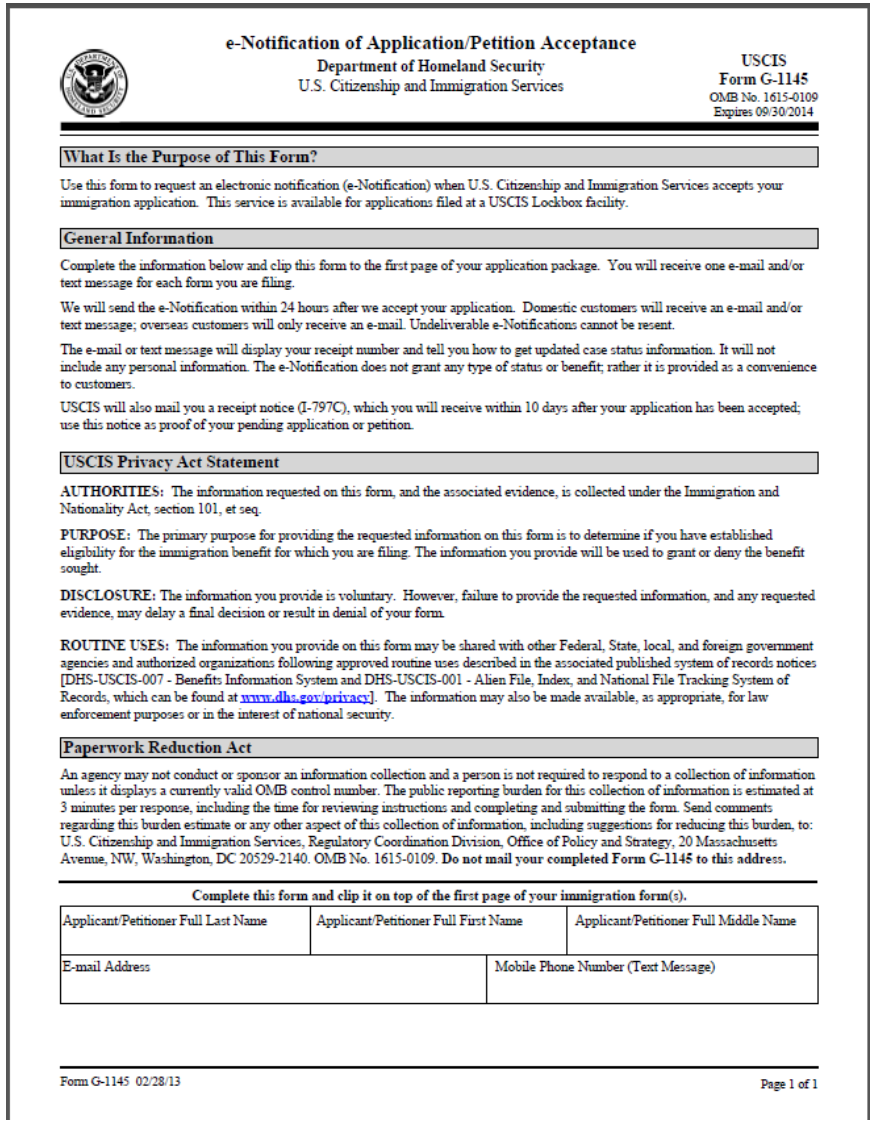
What is Optional Practical Training STEM Extension?

Optional Practical Training STEM Extension (STEM OPT) is a 24-month extension directly follo
expand on previous academic training through a bona-fide employer-employee relationship.
qualify for the STEM extension, and employment must be related to the STEM major field of

What steps must I take in order to complete the STEM OPT application process?

1. Complete Form I-983 Training Plan with employer
2. Apply for STEM OPT in Cystart
3. Receive e-mail from ISSO to pick up STEM OPT I-20
4. Gather STEM OPT application documents
5. STEM OPT application review by ISSO (optional)
6. Mail STEM OPT application to USCIS
7. Receive receipt notice (Complete new I-9 with employer, if necessary)
8. Wait 90 days (or more) for adjudication
9. Receive EAD card in the mail
10. Complete new I-9 with employer

Form G-1145



e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form G-1145
OMB No. 1615-0109
Expires 09/30/2014

What Is the Purpose of This Form?

Use this form to request an electronic notification (e-Notification) when U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services accepts your immigration application. This service is available for applications filed at a USCIS Lockbox facility.

General Information

Complete the information below and clip this form to the first page of your application package. You will receive one e-mail and/or text message for each form you are filing.

We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application. Domestic customers will receive an e-mail and/or text message; overseas customers will only receive an e-mail. Undeliverable e-Notifications cannot be resent.

The e-mail or text message will display your receipt number and tell you how to get updated case status information. It will not include any personal information. The e-Notification does not grant any type of status or benefit; rather it is provided as a convenience to customers.

USCIS will also mail you a receipt notice (I-797C), which you will receive within 10 days after your application has been accepted; use this notice as proof of your pending application or petition.

USCIS Privacy Act Statement

AUTHORITIES: The information requested on this form, and the associated evidence, is collected under the Immigration and Nationality Act, section 101, et seq.

PURPOSE: The primary purpose for providing the requested information on this form is to determine if you have established eligibility for the immigration benefit for which you are filing. The information you provide will be used to grant or deny the benefit sought.

DISCLOSURE: The information you provide is voluntary. However, failure to provide the requested information, and any requested evidence, may delay a final decision or result in denial of your form.

ROUTINE USES: The information you provide on this form may be shared with other Federal, State, local, and foreign government agencies and authorized organizations following approved routine uses described in the associated published system of records notices [DHS-USCIS-007 - Benefits Information System and DHS-USCIS-001 - Alien File, Index, and National File Tracking System of Records, which can be found at www.dhs.gov/privacy]. The information may also be made available, as appropriate, for law enforcement purposes or in the interest of national security.

Paperwork Reduction Act

An agency may not conduct or sponsor an information collection and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated at 3 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions and completing and submitting the form. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Regulatory Coordination Division, Office of Policy and Strategy, 20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20529-2140. OMB No. 1615-0109. **Do not mail your completed Form G-1145 to this address.**

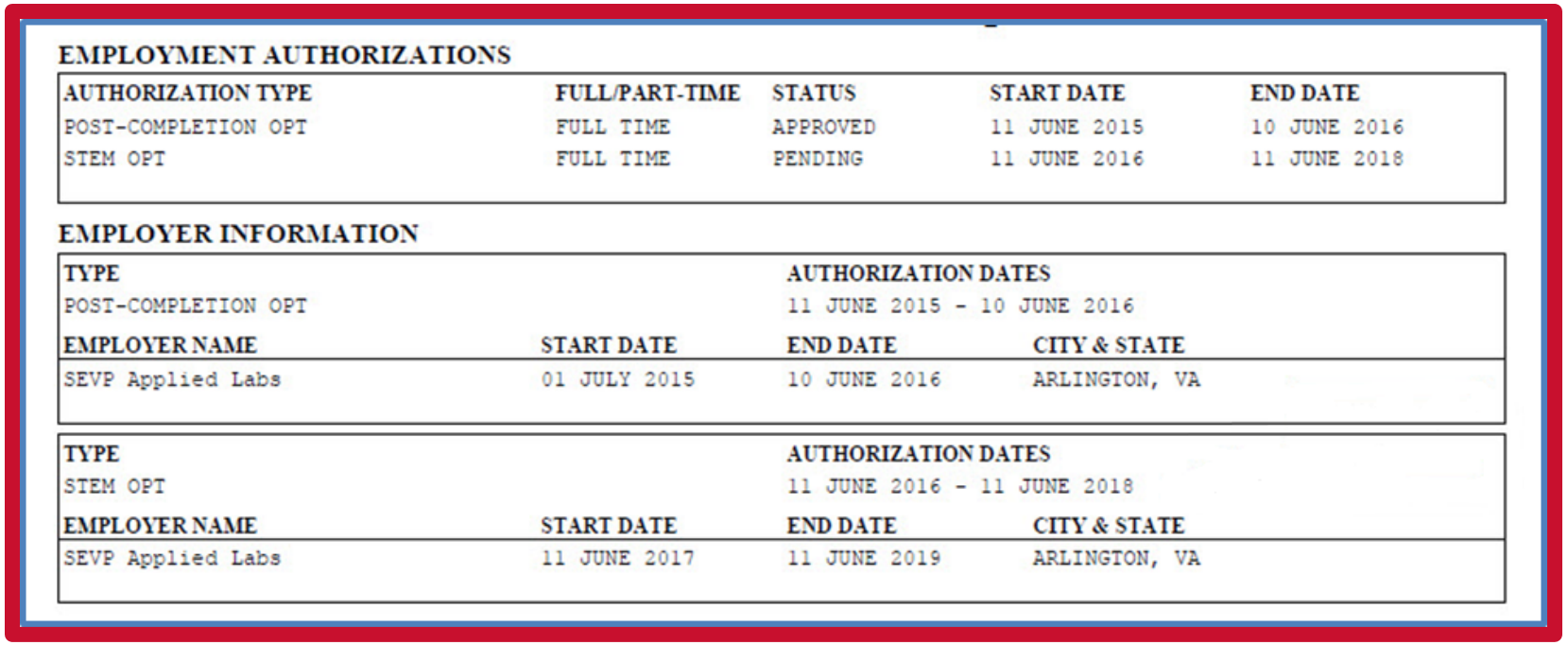
Complete this form and clip it on top of the first page of your immigration form(s).

Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name
E-mail Address		Mobile Phone Number (Text Message)

Form G-1145 02/28/13 Page 1 of 1

New I-20 with STEM OPT Recommendation

- Recommendation indicated on page 2 of new I-20
  - Requested begin and end date



EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

AUTHORIZATION TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	APPROVED	11 JUNE 2015	10 JUNE 2016
STEM OPT	FULL TIME	PENDING	11 JUNE 2016	11 JUNE 2018

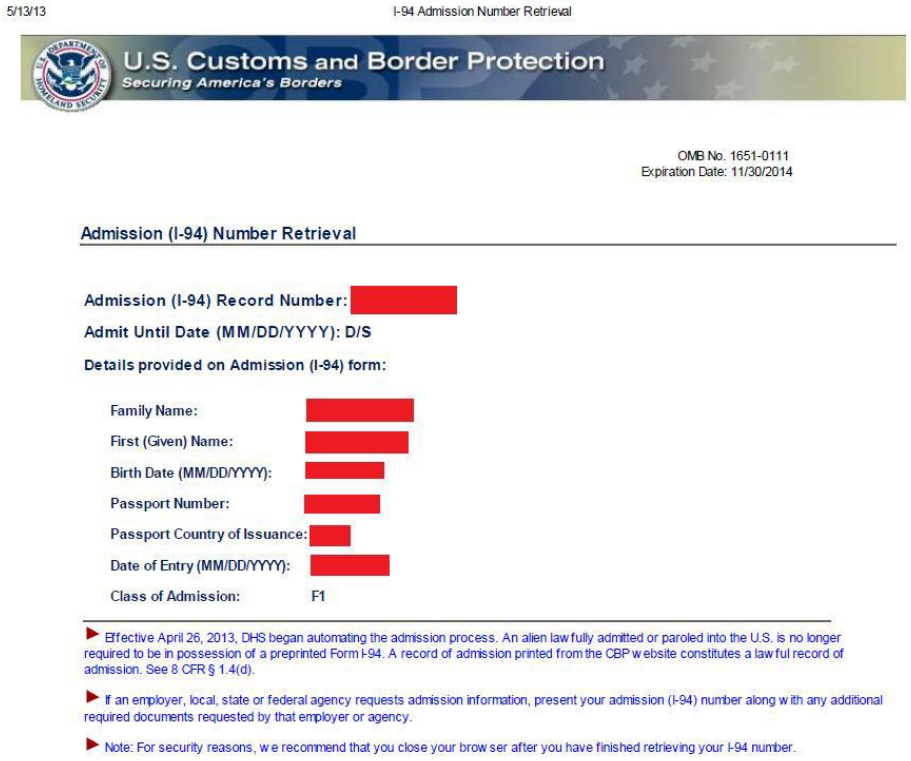
EMPLOYER INFORMATION

TYPE		AUTHORIZATION DATES	
POST-COMPLETION OPT		11 JUNE 2015 - 10 JUNE 2016	
EMPLOYER NAME	**START DATE**	**END DATE**	**CITY & STATE**
SEVP Applied Labs	01 JULY 2015	10 JUNE 2016	ARLINGTON, VA

TYPE		AUTHORIZATION DATES	
STEM OPT		11 JUNE 2016 - 11 JUNE 2018	
EMPLOYER NAME	**START DATE**	**END DATE**	**CITY & STATE**
SEVP Applied Labs	11 JUNE 2017	11 JUNE 2019	ARLINGTON, VA

I-94 Record

- Paper or Electronic copy
- Retrieve from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home



5/13/13 I-94 Admission Number Retrieval

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

OMB No. 1651-0111
Expiration Date: 11/30/2014

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: [redacted]
Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): D/S
Details provided on Admission (I-94) form:

Family Name: [redacted]
First (Given) Name: [redacted]
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY): [redacted]
Passport Number: [redacted]
Passport Country of Issuance: [redacted]
Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY): [redacted]
Class of Admission: F1

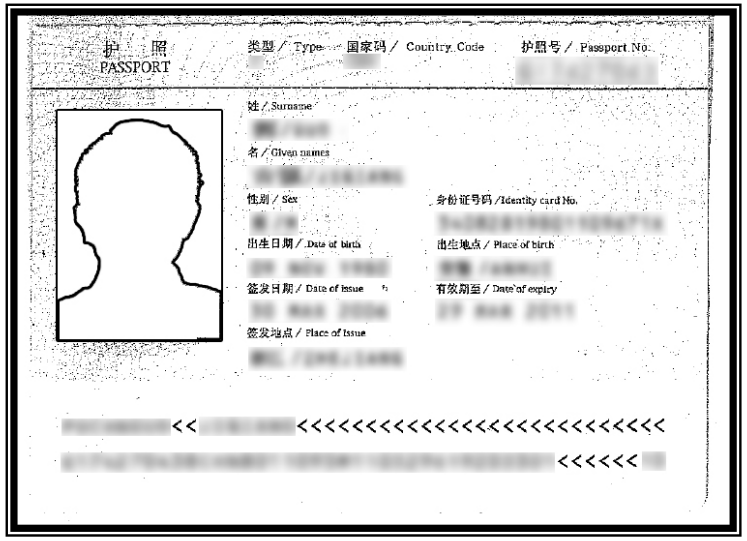
▶ Effective April 26, 2013, DHS began automating the admission process. An alien lawfully admitted or paroled into the U.S. is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94. A record of admission printed from the CBP website constitutes a lawful record of admission. See 8 CFR § 1.4(d).

▶ If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission (I-94) number along with any additional required documents requested by that employer or agency.

▶ Note: For security reasons, we recommend that you close your browser after you have finished retrieving your I-94 number.

Passport and Visa Copies

- Biographic information
  - Photo, date of birth, country of birth
- Passport expiration date
  - Sometimes on a different page
- Most recent Visa page



Previous OPT I-20s and EADs

- Copy of previous I-20s showing OPT information

- Copy of all previous EADs
  - Front and back

Degree and Employment Information

- Copy of official transcript
- Copy of diploma (optional)
  - Indicating education level and field of study
- Letter of employment
  - Offer letter (if starting in the future) or letter confirming your employment with the company (if currently employed)
  - On company letterhead

Sending STEM OPT Application to USCIS

Application Review

- STEM OPT Application Reviewed by ISSO Adviser

- In person during OPT review times
  - Bring in completed application

- Online through CyStart
  - Upload completed application to OPT Application Online Review form

Mailing Final Application

1. Scan application, submit scanned copy to ISSO, and keep copy for yourself
   - This is important in case USCIS requests additional information or makes a mistake on your application.
   - Submit the scanned copy of your final application in 1 PDF file here:
     - Cystart > F-1 Student Services > Immigration Document Upload
2. Mail application to USCIS
   - Review Form I-765 direct filing addresses based on your address

Electronic Receipt Notice

- **You will receive an electronic receipt notice from USCIS by email and text if you complete the G-1145 form.**
  - This commonly takes to 2-3 weeks
  - You can check the status of your case with information in the e-mail
  - Sample e-mail message:

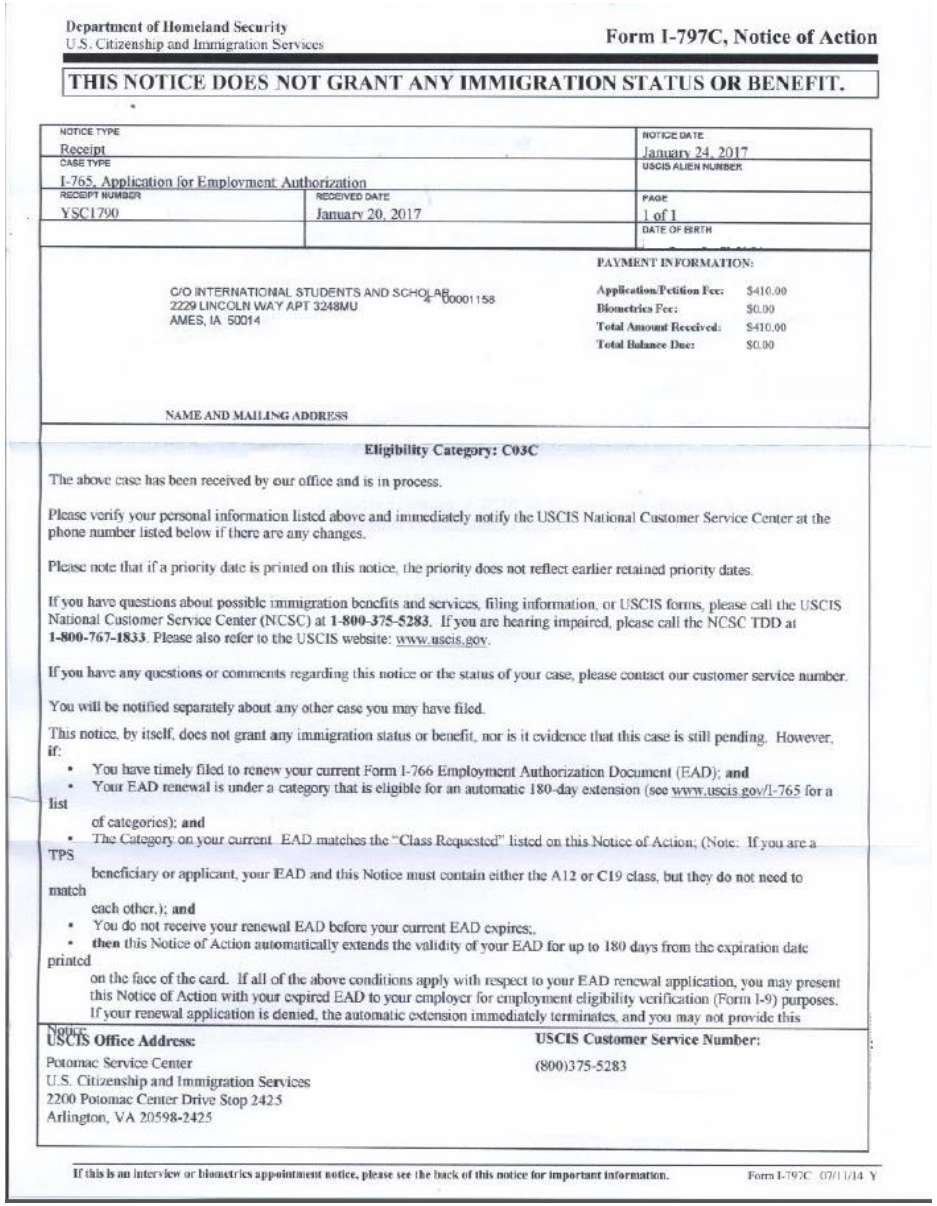
Your case has been accepted and routed to the USCIS Potomac Service Center for processing. Within 7-10 days by standard mail you will receive your official Receipt Notice (Form I-797) with your Receipt Number YSCxxxxxxxxx. With the official Receipt Notice (Form I-797) you may visit www.uscis.gov where you can check the status of your case using My Case Status. We suggest you wait until you have received your Form I-797 before checking My Case Status.

This confirmation provides notification of the date USCIS received your case. This notice does NOT grant any immigration status or benefit. You MAY NOT present this notice as evidence that you have been granted any immigration status or benefit. Further, this notice does NOT constitute evidence that your case remains pending with USCIS. The current status of your case must be verified with USCIS.

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE

Paper Receipt Notice

- **You will receive a paper receipt notice from USCIS**
  - USCIS sends a paper I-797 Receipt Notice to the mailing address listed on the I-765
    - May take 2 – 4 weeks
  - 90-120 day processing starts from I-797 received date
  - Provide ISSO a copy of I-797 Receipt Notice once received (Cystart > F-1 Student Services > Immigration Document Upload)



Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Form I-797C, Notice of Action

THIS NOTICE DOES NOT GRANT ANY IMMIGRATION STATUS OR BENEFIT.

NOTICE TYPE	NOTICE DATE
Receipt	January 24, 2017
CASE TYPE	USCIS ALIEN NUMBER
I-765, Application for Employment Authorization	
RECEIPT NUMBER: YSC1790 / RECEIVED DATE: January 20, 2017	PAGE: 1 of 1
	DATE OF BIRTH

C/O INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR
2229 LINCOLN WAY APT 3248MU
AMES, IA 50014

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Application/Petition Fee:	$410.00
Biometrics Fee:	$0.00
Total Amount Received:	$410.00
Total Balance Due:	$0.00

NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS

Eligibility Category: C03C

The above case has been received by our office and is in process.

Please verify your personal information listed above and immediately notify the USCIS National Customer Service Center at the phone number listed below if there are any changes.

Please note that if a priority date is printed on this notice, the priority does not reflect earlier retained priority dates.

If you have questions about possible immigration benefits and services, filing information, or USCIS forms, please call the USCIS National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at **1-800-375-5283**. If you are hearing impaired, please call the NCSC TDD at **1-800-767-1833**. Please also refer to the USCIS website: www.uscis.gov.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this notice or the status of your case, please contact our customer service number.

You will be notified separately about any other case you may have filed.

This notice, by itself, does not grant any immigration status or benefit, nor is it evidence that this case is still pending. However, if:

- You have timely filed to renew your current Form I-766 Employment Authorization Document (EAD); **and**
- Your EAD renewal is under a category that is eligible for an automatic 180-day extension (see www.uscis.gov/I-765 for a list of categories); **and**
- The Category on your current EAD matches the "Class Requested" listed on this Notice of Action; (Note: If you are a TPS beneficiary or applicant, your EAD and this Notice must contain either the A12 or C19 class, but they do not need to match each other.); **and**
- You do not receive your renewal EAD before your current EAD expires;.
- **then** this Notice of Action automatically extends the validity of your EAD for up to 180 days from the expiration date printed on the face of the card. If all of the above conditions apply with respect to your EAD renewal application, you may present this Notice of Action with your expired EAD to your employer for employment eligibility verification (Form I-9) purposes. If your renewal application is denied, the automatic extension immediately terminates, and you may not provide this Notice.

USCIS Office Address:
Potomac Service Center
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
2200 Potomac Center Drive Stop 2425
Arlington, VA 20598-2425

USCIS Customer Service Number:
(800)375-5283

If this is an interview or biometrics appointment notice, please see the back of this notice for important information.

Form I-797C (07/11/14) Y

Case Status

- Use www.uscis.gov (click “Check Case Status”)
  - Might stay on “Case Was Received” for 2-4 months

Pending STEM OPT Application

- While your STEM OPT application is pending with USCIS:
  - You remain in legal F-1 status
  - You may continue working for 180 days past the end date on the Post-Completion OPT EAD card, as long as STEM OPT application was timely and properly filed
    - USCIS will issue a Receipt Notice which you may use to complete Form I-9 with your employer to authorize this 180 day period of employment

Receiving your EAD

- Your EAD card will be mailed to address listed on Form I-765
  - If you move while your OPT application is processing, you will need to submit a change of address request with USCIS
- If more than 10 days have passed since the USCIS Case Status indicates your EAD has been delivered, you may send an email to isso@iastate.edu or call 515-294-1120

Application Process Overview

1. Verify that you are eligible for the STEM OPT Extension
2. Complete Form I-983 Training Plan with employer
3. Complete the STEM OPT Extension e-form in Cystart
4. Compile all required application materials
5. Collect STEM OPT recommendation I-20 from ISSO
6. Bring or send application materials to ISSO for review (optional)
7. Mail final application to USCIS
8. Receive a receipt notice within 2-3 weeks after submission from USCIS
9. If STEM OPT is approved, USCIS will mail your new EAD to the address listed on your Form I-765

Reporting Requirements During STEM OPT

Reporting Requirements

- Must **update ISSO within Cystart within 10 days** of a change to:
  - Living address
  - Employer
  - Employer address
  - Employer name
  - Loss of employment

- If you change employers, the new employer must be enrolled in E-Verify and you must submit the following to ISSO:
  - A new Form I-983 for your new employer within 10 days of starting
  - A final evaluation (page 5 of the Form I-983) of your experience with the previous employer

- Required to complete a **validation report for ISSO every 6 months** while on STEM OPT Extension
  - Due within 10 business days of each reporting date
  - Complete OPT Reporting e-form through CyStart

Changes to the Form I-983

- Student and employer are required to submit a modified Form I-983 to ISSO, if any changes are made

- Material changes and deviations include:
  - Any change of Employer Identification Number
  - Any reduction in compensation that is not tied to reduction in hours worked
  - Any significant decrease in hours worked per week
  - Any decrease in hours worked below the minimum 20 hour weekly requirement
  - Any change that makes the I-983 inaccurate

Department of Homeland Security may conduct a site visit to any employer.

Form I-983 - Evaluation Requirements

- Student must submit a self-evaluation of their progress toward the training goals outlined in Form I-983, signed by student and employer:
  - Require an initial evaluation within **12 months** and final evaluation by **24 months**
    - Students will also need to submit a final evaluation when changing positions/employers
    - Due within 10 days following the conclusion of the reporting period
  - Changes to the Form I-983, Training Plan must be reported to the ISSO
    - Student must submit a modified Form I-983 through CyStart via the “OPT Reporting” e-form

Periods of Unemployment

- **Allowed up to 150 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT (90) and STEM OPT (60) combined**
  - Count unemployment days between start date on post-completion OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and end date of STEM OPT
  - Count all days, including weekends and holidays, during unemployment
  - Count any week employed fewer than 20 hours as a week of unemployment
  - Count days outside the U.S., if unemployed

- **Student does not receive additional 60 days of STEM OPT unemployment until STEM OPT application is approved**

- **Considered a violation of F-1 status to go over 150 days of unemployment**
  - Student is required to keep track of unemployment periods

- **Students and employers must report the end of employment to ISSO within 5 business days**

Travel

Travel During STEM OPT Extension

- Students are able to travel while on an approved 24-month STEM OPT Extension

- Students are able to travel while on the 24-month STEM OPT Extension and should have the following documents when they re-enter the United States:
  - STEM OPT I-20 with a travel signature within 6 months of reentry
  - Passport with at least 6 months of validity
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - STEM OPT EAD card
  - Letter of employment

Questions?

Please email ISSO at isso@iastate.edu or make an appointment with an International Student Advisor

Contact Information

International Students and Scholars Office

4530 Memorial Union

2229 Lincoln Way, Ames IA 50014

Phone: 515-294-1120

Fax: 515-294-8263

Email: isso@iastate.edu

Website: www.isso.iastate.edu