

September 2006 *International Line* Newsletter

Welcome back to Texas Tech University!

We here at the Office of International Affairs would like to welcome back all of our current students and extend a warm welcome to our new students who are starting out for the Fall 2006 Semester. We hope that all of you had a profitable summer elsewhere around the United States or enjoyed being with your friends and family back home.

New Insurance Contact --- Appeal of a waiver denial

Effective immediately Sharon Hale will no longer be the contact for insurance problems. Students who have questions regarding the TTU insurance policy or other questions regarding waivers should contact **Judith Baxter-Aung at 817-479-2100, or toll free at 888-308-7320**. Her email is Judith.Baxter-Aung@AHPCare.com. Note: Students can find further information by checking the [FAQs](#) site at the ISSS website, including information about appealing a waiver denial. You can also find [health insurance waiver information](#) at the HSC Student Health Services website.

EAD cards taking 100 to 120 days --- Please be more patient while waiting!

Applications for optional practical training and the EAD card are taking about 100 to as many as 120 days from the time that you submit the Form I-765 application until when you finally receive the card. We strongly suggest that you apply for the card sometime around the last two weeks of September and the first week of October, if you want to be able to have the card by the second week of January. We hope that eventually the amount of turnaround time will begin to shorten, but for now you should expect that the EAD card will take longer to get. There is not much more that we can do here. This is a national situation for all concerned and is not just confined to universities in Texas.

OIA will notify you when your EAD comes in

All students who have OPT applications submitted will be notified as expeditiously as possible when their EAD arrives. We can assure you on this. Please keep in mind that the personnel who work at the USCIS Texas Service Center are trying their best to get these cards out to you. Let's don't make their jobs any tougher by making unfair demands on them. You are not the only one who may be waiting for his or her card. It will come.

Finishing your F-1 program in December 2006? You can apply for Optional Practical Training and get 12 months of Work Authorization

- For students who are ready to complete their academic programs
- Application should be submitted by October 1, 2006
- Must be in F-1 status for at least one year
- EAD card is processed by the USCIS at the Texas Service Center
- \$180 processing fee
- Two frontal "passport style" photos
- Complete Form I-765
- Need academic advisor's recommendation
- Need new I-20 from international student counselor indicating OPT request
- Need all F-1 immigration documents and any prior EAD cards

Registration Maintenance of Status HOLDS

Registration HOLDS will automatically be placed on your TECHSIS file for the Fall 2006 semester on or around September 13, 2006. The OIA will NOT be releasing these HOLDS until about November 1, 2006 at which time you will be eligible to pre-enroll for the Spring 2007 semester. Remember to maintain the minimum required number of hours depending on whether you are an undergraduate (12 hours) or a graduate student (9 hours).

Temporary insurance cards available at the receptionist's desk

You can pick-up your temporary insurance card at the front desk at the OIA for those of you who have the Academic Plans Health Insurance or at Thompson Hall.

Please stay in the reception area at the OIA

We request that all international students please remain in the lobby reception area of the Office of International Affairs when you visit us. Please do not walk in the hallways where the counselors' offices are located until you are called or summoned by a counselor to his or her office. We want to respect the confidentiality of all staff and their student clients who are in the offices discussing issues that may be personal and private and not for public consumption.

Check out our new web site

Please take a look at our new web site at <http://www.iaff.ttu.edu> and then hit on the [ISSS Office](#) button. There is a lot of information that will answer your questions quickly and effectively. We encourage you to use this site. Many of the phone calls that we receive are repetitious and the information that the receptionists give via phone can easily be found on the web site.

CPT and finishing your program

Please be advised that curricular practical training is an academic course and should be completed before you submit your thesis or dissertation. Most of the academic departments consider the submission and then defense of the thesis or dissertation to be the end of your program. You cannot do CPT after you have defended your thesis or dissertation. Also, CPT cannot be used as a bridge from the end of your program to your optional practical training.

Always sign-in to see a counselor at the OIA

Please remember that all students are required to sign-in to see an international student counselor, the international scholar counselor, or the international faculty counselor at the OIA. Please get a sign-in password and then memorize it.

EADs will be processed only at the Service Centers beginning in November

Please be advised that EAD cards will no longer be processed at the USCIS district offices beginning November 1, 2006. The only places that will deal with the processing of EAD cards for OPT will be the four USCIS Service Centers, and specifically the Texas Service Center for international students who are applying for the EAD as F-1 students from Texas Tech University.

Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship Information Sessions

August 29, 2006 to October 6, 2006

Every Tuesday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

Every Wednesday from 9:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Every Thursday from 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Every Friday from 1:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Information sessions will include pointers for writing essays and picking references!

Please contact Lilly Kilcrease (lilly.j.kilcrease@ttu.edu) for more information.

International students are encouraged to attend before applying. (See "Scholarships" on Page 4.)

Curricular practical training

All F-1 international students are authorized by immigration regulations to do curricular practical training as a part of their academic program at a college or university in the United States. The curricular practical training is usually in the form of an internship listed in the catalogue. Most students do practical training during the summer months. However, it can also be done during certain prescribed conditions during either the fall or spring semester. Most departments at Texas Tech University have internships for TTU international students. The following criteria must be met:

1. The curricular practical training must be an **integral part of the student's academic program**. It must be stated so in [writing](#) by the academic advisor. If there is no internship listed in the catalogue, then the academic advisor must designate a "selective topics", directed readings, or a research course that can be used as a substitute. A Master's thesis research or doctoral dissertation that is **100% directly related** to the student's curricular practical training may count as an internship.
2. The internships **must be listed in the catalogue** and available to all Texas Tech students.
3. The student must receive a letter for offer of job from the prospective employer. It must be **employer specific** and **date specific**.
4. The academic advisor **must recommend the student for curricular practical training** based on the letter for offer of job. The academic advisor must state categorically in [writing](#) that the curricular practical training is an "integral part of the student's program."
5. You must be in F-1 status for **at least one year** to be eligible for CPT.
6. If all of the above criteria are met, the student will be **authorized by an international student counselor at the OIA to work** for the listed employer. Please apply 2-3 weeks prior to the start of your CPT.

Remember that curricular practical training is "NOT work for work's sake." It is a university academic course in which you are receiving credit and from which you will be evaluated as to how you apply the theories, concepts, and ideas learned in the classroom to the work site environment.

Mandatory enrollment for CPT internship

All F-1 students on or soon to be applying for curricular practical training are reminded that you are required to be enrolled for credit for the term in which you are doing CPT. Failure to enroll for the internship and then working at the work site is unauthorized employment. If you work without authorization, then you are in violation of your status and are subject to reinstatement with the Department of Homeland Security. Where this can really come back to haunt you is if you ever apply for a change of status to H-1B. Part of your application deals with a data mining process where all of your records are checked. If DHS discovers that you did not enroll for a CPT course, then your H-1B application is denied. A word to the wise!

Scholarships and assistance offered in Fall 2006

Florence Terry Griswold Scholarship 1: \$2,500 (one award)

For a woman who is a citizen of a Pan American country (other than the United States) and is pursuing a graduate degree at a state-supported college or university in Texas. More than \$2,500 may be awarded in years when funds are available. Go to <http://www.pardt.org/> and go to "Florence Terry Griswold Scholarship" for more information. Applications CANNOT be submitted by fax and must be post-marked by no later than January 31, 2007.

Good Neighbor Scholarship (GNS) 2007-2008 Program

[GNS](#) provides for out of state tuition waiver for citizens born in and at least a five-year current resident of a politically independent nation in the western hemisphere (excluding Cuba and the United States); student must be unconditionally admitted to Texas Tech University and enrolled full-time maintaining satisfactory academic progress; student should be planning on returning to country of origin upon successful completion of the academic program. Students cannot be receiving an out of state waiver from any other scholarship. Deadline for application: February 28, 2007. Awards are for the following academic year beginning with the Fall 2007 Semester.

From your major department

Your *best chance* for getting a scholarship is from your own major department. If you qualify with the proper grade point average, you are eligible to be considered. Contact the department.

Tuition Assistance for Students of Mexico

For citizens or permanent residents of Mexico; students must be planning to return to Mexico after completion of program; students must be enrolled full-time; and, they must demonstrate financial need. Assistance allows Mexican nationals to pay in-state tuition.

[Tuition Assistance for Students of Mexico Application Form](#)

Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship (SACS)

All international students are eligible to apply for the Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship program. Applications are due by a designated deadline. For international student awardees, the SACS may provide a certain monetary award for an appropriate academic term or summer session. Every TTU student pays the SACS fee every academic term that he or she is enrolled at Texas Tech University, and therefore, is eligible to apply each term. ***Interested students should attend one of the scheduled information sessions at the Office of International Affairs. (See "Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship Information Sessions" in above article on Page 3.)*** [Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship Link](#)

International Students Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG)

The Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG) is for very special situations where there is a ***critical and compelling need*** to assist a student who has had a sudden and a major financial problem. Examples might be currency fluctuations in one's home country, or a natural disaster in one's home country which affects the economy and the financial services sector and, thus, a student's ability to receive enough funds from his native country to pay his financial obligations here in the United States. Any application for a TPEG must be correctly, rigorously, and timely documented.

[International Students TPEG Application](#)

Don't be delayed at the airport at reentry --- Get your I-20 signed!

If you are going to be traveling outside of the United States for the upcoming Christmas-New Year's vacation break, please make certain that your I-20 is endorsed on page 3 for reentry. Not having your own I-20 and/or your dependent's I-20 signed could result in you and your family members being detained and cited for an incomplete inspection necessitating your having to report to the port of entry again 30 days later.

Prevention of illness --- Washing your hands!

Protect yourself better from colds, flu, and the "grippe" by simply washing your hands more with hot soap and water. Most cold and flu germs are transferred by hand contact to something that is later touched by someone else's hands. While washing your hands may not necessarily prevent you from eventually getting sick, it may lessen and reduce the effects of any illness that you will get later. We encourage all of you to "Wash your hands!" well, particularly as the cold and flu season approaches.

Counselors are not available Thursday mornings

Please remember that ISSS counselors at the Office of International Affairs are not available to see students on Thursday mornings, except in emergency situations. Your compliance with this policy will be greatly appreciated.

Use your Texas Tech email address

Please use your **ttu.edu** mailing address so that you can be sure that you will get your *International Line* newsletter and any other messages which might be sent from this office. Please relay this information to other international students and your respective country association members.

F-2 status applying for a change of status to F-1

Remember that all F-2 dependents who are applying for a change of status to F-1 will not be able to register for classes until they are approved for a change of status to F-1. This is a firm requirement which is expressly stated in the immigration regulations.

Important things to remember!

- You must notify us of any change of address within ten days.
- If you are completing your program in December, please submit your request for optional practical training in September.
- Get your I-20 endorsed for travel outside of the U.S.
- Make certain that you have your immigration documents with you when you travel around the United States and in the state of Texas.
- Make certain that we have a correct international address for you on our data base. See an international counselor for an update.
- Maintain your minimum enrollment of 9 hours as a graduate student and 12 hours as an undergraduate. Contact an international student counselor regarding exceptions.