

Will you graduate in Spring 2025?

ISSS is hosting an International Student Graduation Reception

Enjoy an afternoon reception with refreshments, photo opportunities, and spend time with your fellow graduates and families.

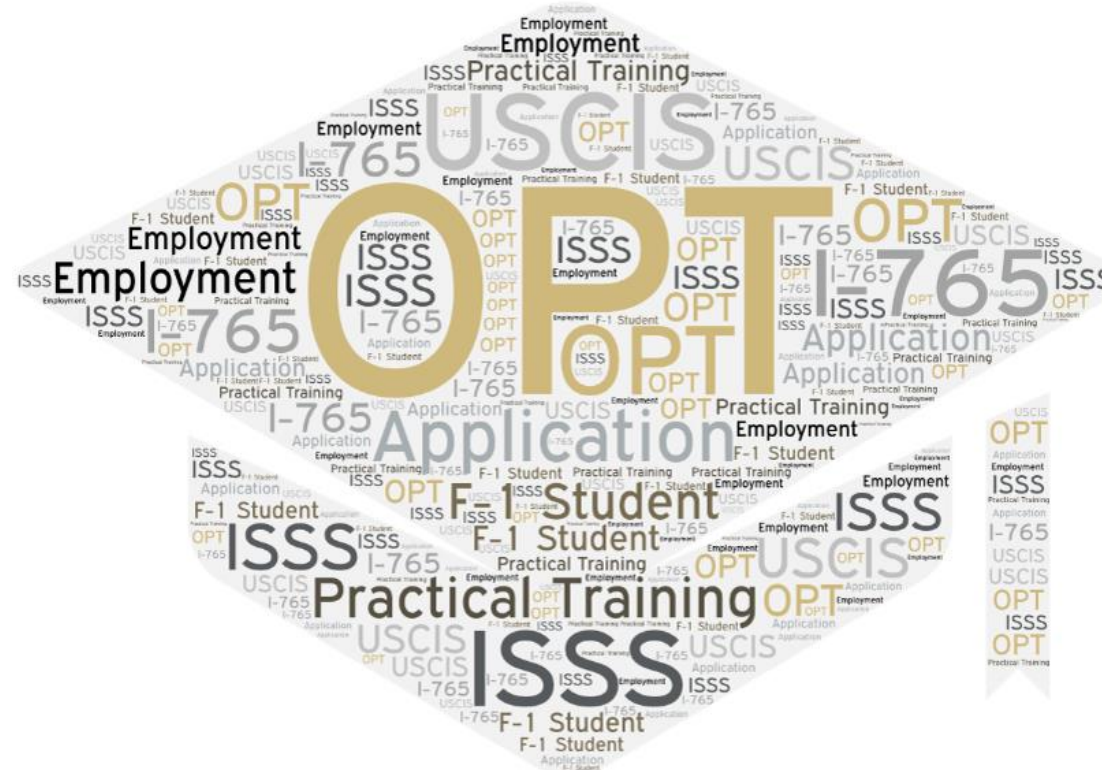
Friday, May 9th

1:30pm – 3:30pm

Tent on University Club Lawn

Graduating students can pick up a gold cord during office hours in April from the ISSS front desk from **April 1 through April 30**. A Buff One card is required.





Preparing Your Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Application

Gold underlined text is hyperlinked – click on links for more information



International Student & Scholar Services
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

05/01/2025

What is Post- Completion OPT?

Employment authorization is granted by USCIS *after* completing all degree requirements or coursework (excluding thesis or dissertation credits), allowing you to have a job, internship, or volunteer work that directly relates to your **major field of study**.

- **Temporary:** up to 12 months
- **Optional:** a benefit of F-1 status
- **Authorized by USCIS** ([U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services](#))
 - ISSS **only recommends** that your post-completion OPT application be approved; the final decision is made by USCIS.

****A job offer is not necessary for employment authorization approval!****



Am I eligible?

- ✓ Enrolled for at least **1 academic year in valid non-immigrant status in the U.S.** (Fall & Spring semester)
- ✓ **Enrolled full-time** (or authorized Reduced Course Load) during the semester you apply for OPT
- ✓ Have not completed more than **364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** at your current degree level;
- ✓ Have not used **12 months or more of OPT work authorization** at the same or higher degree level



When should I apply?

Earliest: 90 days before your last day of **required** enrollment in your final semester

Latest: 60 days after your last day of **required** enrollment in your final semester

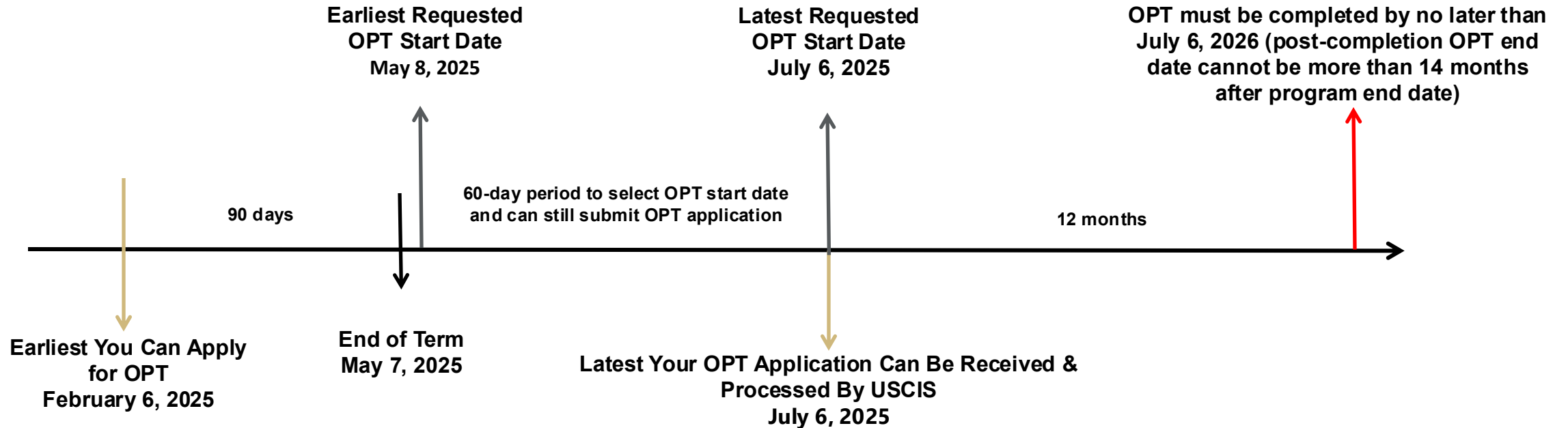
Example for Spring 2025:

- Final Semester: Spring 2025
- Last Day of Enrollment: May 7, 2025
- Apply Between: February 6, 2025 – July 6, 2025
 - *As July 6th falls on a Sunday, students should ensure their application is receipted by USCIS no later than July 3rd*

APPLY AS EARLY AS YOU CAN!



Post-Completion OPT Request Timeline Example (Spring 2025)





Applying for Post-Completion OPT

How do I apply for post-completion OPT?

1. Complete [the Post-Completion OPT I-20 Request e-form](#) (available in [MyISSS portal](#))
2. The e-form will be automatically sent to your academic advisor for their completion
3. After your academic advisor signs off, the form will be sent to ISSS for processing. Please allow 2 to 5 business days.
4. ISSS will issue your new I-20 with the OPT recommendation and send it via email.
5. Print and sign your new I-20 under "Student Attestation" in pen (not electronically)!
6. Submit your application to USCIS by [electronically filing](#) Form I-765 with USCIS online and paying the [filing fee](#).



What happens if I apply to USCIS without an OPT recommendation I-20?

- USCIS will **deny** your application.
- Regulations require the OPT recommendation to be entered into SEVIS prior to the post-completion OPT filing and the applicant must include the recommendation I-20 with their application.
- If your application was denied, you will **not** be refunded the filing fee.





Submitting Your Post- Completion OPT Application to USCIS

How do I electronically file my complete Post-Completion OPT application materials?

Create a USCIS online account at myaccount.uscis.gov.



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Submitting the Form I-765

- Wait until you have your new I-20 before filing Form I-765 with USCIS.
 - Please review the [I-765 instructions on the USCIS website](#) and the [ISSS Post-Completion OPT website](#)
- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of ISSS entering the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.
- You must be physically present in the United States to apply.

ISSS offers advising sessions to [review your draft I-765](#) before submission to USCIS



Timely Filing Consideration!

- ISSS has observed that I-765 applications submitted online are often receipted the day after submission.
- To be safe, ISSS recommends submitting your I-765 no later than 27 days after receiving your recommending I-20 from ISSS.

Pay.gov Payment Confirmation: USCIS I-765

1 message

ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov <ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov>

Tue, Apr 11, 2023 at 9:17 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Your payment has been submitted to Pay.gov and the details are below. If you have a question about this notification or need technical support, please contact us online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/contactus> and reference the receipt number(s) shown below.

Application Name: USCIS I-765

Pay.gov Tracking ID: [REDACTED]

Agency Tracking ID: [REDACTED]

Transaction Type: Credit Card

Transaction Amount: \$410.00

Payment Date: Apr 12, 2023

Transaction Date: Apr 12, 2023 03:17:50 AM

Your payment was applied to the following case(s):

[REDACTED]



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Premium Processing Option for e-filed I-765s!

- Online filing of Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service
- Guarantees adjudicative action within 30 business days of receipt
 - Does not include time for printing and mailing the EAD
- Premium Processing fee is in addition to the I-765 filing fee
 - Fees are subject to change
- Guarantees some sort of adjudicative action within 30 business days of receipt



Case Was Changed To A Premium Processing Case

We changed your case, Receipt Number IOE9605064368, from a standard case to a premium-processing case. The premium-processing clock started on April 14, 2023.

Your premium-processing receipt notice contains contact information for direct inquiries on your case. Please follow the instructions in the notice. If you move, contact the premium-processing unit directly to update your address.



**While Your Post-Completion
OPT Application is Pending**

How long will it take USCIS to process my OPT application?

- Check this processing times website

- Select *I-765 Application for Employment Authorization*
- Select *Potomac Service Center*
- Scroll down until you see *Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]*

Example (subject to change):

Processing time for Application for Employment Authorization (I-765) at Potomac Service Center

80% of cases are completed within

2.5
Months



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What should I do while I wait?

Pay attention to receipt notices, mail, and notifications from USCIS

- Contact ISSS if your OPT application is rejected, denied, or if you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE).
- Use USCIS online tools or call the National Customer Service Number (800-375-5283) to submit an online case inquiry or service request.
- Check your case status online.

Case Inquiry

 Case outside normal processing time <i>Think a case is taking longer than expected?</i>	 Did not receive notice by mail <i>Think a notice is lost or missing?</i>	 Did not receive card by mail <i>Think a card is lost or missing?</i>	 Did not receive document by mail <i>Think a document is lost or missing?</i>
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Service Request

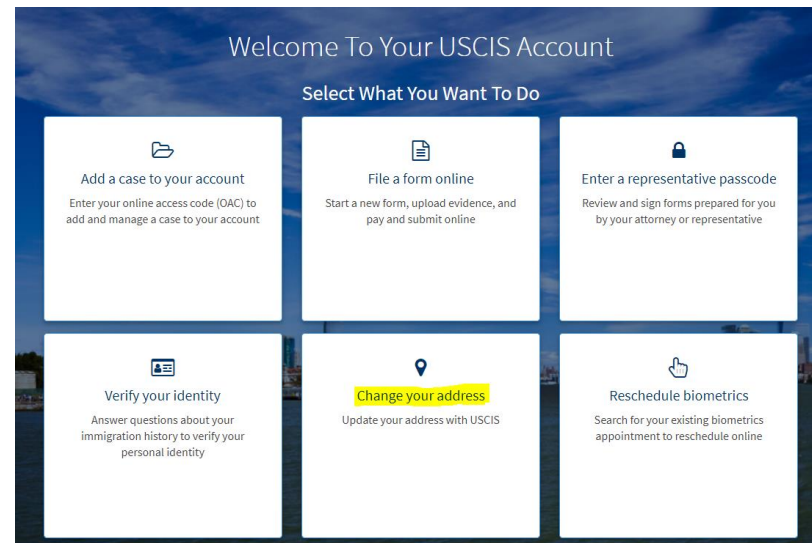
 Appointment Accommodations <i>Request accommodations for an interview appointment</i>	 Typographic Error <i>Make typographic corrections for a case</i>	
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Updating Your Mailing Address

If you move or stop receiving mail at the mailing address you entered on the I-765:

- **Immediately** update your address information in your personal **USCIS Account**.



Can I leave the U.S. while my application is pending?

Yes, you can travel, but you must carry the following with you:

- your post-completion OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature
- an active F-1 visa (unless exempt)
- receipt notice from USCIS
- EAD Card, if your application is approved while you are outside of the U.S

Travel risk considerations:

- If USCIS submits a request for additional evidence (RFE) while you are outside of the U.S., you may have difficulties responding, which could lead to a denial
- If your OPT is denied while outside the U.S. and after your I-20 program end date, you cannot re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status to reapply



When can I start working?

- You have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD/OPT card) in hand;
- You are within the OPT employment authorization period on your EAD card; and
- You are working in a job directly related to your major field of study as listed on your OPT I-20.

Please note: If you do not complete your degree by your I-20 end date as expected, please contact ISSS immediately to discuss your options.



EAD: Employment Authorization Document

OPT work authorization is granted in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Dates of employment authorization
You CANNOT work outside of
these dates



What else do I need to
know about Post-
completion OPT?

Reporting Requirements - SEVP Portal

- The SEVP Portal allows students to update the following information:
 - Address
 - Telephone
 - Employer Information
- Immigration regulations require you to report changes to the above information within 10-days
- You will receive an email from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account on the first day of your authorized OPT start date.
 - If you do not receive the SEVP email and are in your approved period of post-completion OPT, please submit the *SEVP Portal Account Help: Email Address Update/Account Reset* e-form (available in MyISSS portal under “Training/Employment-Related Forms”).



Reporting Requirements – Relevance Statement

- After entering your employment information in the SEVP Portal, submit the *Post-Completion OPT Information Update and Relevance Statement* e-form (available in [MyISSS portal](#) under “Training/Employment-Related Forms”).
- ISSS will email you an updated I-20 with your employer information.

MyISSS

Home
Arrival & Immigration Check-In
[Departmental Services](#)
General Forms
Immigration & Academic-Related Forms
Insurance and Finances
[Training/Employment-Related Forms](#)

Training/Employment

Tasks



Cap-Gap I-20 Request



EAD Card Submission



Post-Completion OPT
Information Update and
Relevance Statement



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How many unemployment days can I use?

90 days total

To stop the unemployment days from accruing, you need to enter your employment information into the SEVP Portal.



Employment

Hours:

- You must be performing your training for at least 20 hours a week.
- There is no maximum limit to the number of hours per week.

Multiple Jobs and Changes: This is allowed as long as:

- Employment is within the authorization period on your EAD
- Each job is directly related to your major field of study (as indicated on your I-20)
- You report all new employment and changes within 10 days via the SEVP Portal



How Training Relates to Major

Logical Connection:

- The [SEVP Policy Guidance: Practical Training-Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and a Student's Major Area of Study](#) states there needs to be a “logical connection” between the duties involved in the practical training opportunities and the student’s major field of study.

Student’s responsibility: It is the student’s responsibility to make the argument that their training relates to their field of study.

Key Questions to Assess Relevance:

- Does the training require a degree in my field of study?
- Do the job duties utilize knowledge from my studies?
- Are there specific courses I have taken that align with the job responsibilities?
- Does the job description mention qualifications or knowledge that aligns with my field of study?

ISSS advisors are not familiar with the specifics of your degree program.

- If you’re unsure about the relevance of a position, reach out to your academic advisor or faculty member for guidance.
- If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, you should obtain a signed letter from your hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your major field of study is related to the work performed.



Acceptable Training During OPT

Payment by Multiple Short-Term Employers

Obtain offer letter and maintain a list of all short-term employment including the employer's contact information and the dates and duration of employment.

Work for Hire (1099 employment)

An individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. Must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods (hours worked per week) and the name and address of the contracting company.

Self-Employed Business Owner

You may start a business and be self-employed. Must work full-time and be able to prove you have a proper business licenses and that work is degree-related.

Employment through an Agency

Must be able to provide evidence showing you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.



Volunteering on OPT

- Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns but the employer must ensure compliance with labor laws.
- Students must provide evidence from their employer verifying they worked more than 20 hours per week
- To participate in volunteer work at CU Boulder, the activity must be a formally established volunteer opportunity.
- CU Boulder departments creating formal volunteer positions should consult the [University Risk Management](#) website for guidance and ensure the project is formally recognized by the university as a volunteer work opportunity. Questions can be directed to: urmucbdirs@cu.edu



Unable to Work in Marijuana (Cannabis) Related Industries

Legal permanent residents or individuals on immigrant or non-immigrant visas should **avoid marijuana use or involvement in marijuana-related activities** as it can have a negative immigration consequences.

This includes working in industries associated with marijuana and cannabidiol (CBD), such as working in a lab extracting CBD oils for medical purposes.



Travel Considerations on OPT

If you do not have a job, travel outside of the U.S. is **not recommended** as the regulations allow re-entry to the U.S. to **resume** training.

- **An absence from the U.S. should be temporary, less than 5 months.**
 - Even with a job offer and valid EAD, an absence greater than 5 months will not be considered temporary and you could be denied re-entry to the U.S.
- **You need a valid F-1 visa to return to the U.S. while on OPT**
 - Review the [ISSS Visa Renewal Handout](#) for information on the renewal process
- **Travel Signatures are valid for 6 months on OPT I-20s**
- **Review the following resources prior to travel**
 - [Travel Handout: Re-entry from Travel Outside the U.S. & Printing Your Electronic I-94](#)
 - [International Travel FAQs for Students on OPT and STEM OPT](#)

Do NOT leave the U.S. if you have a change of status application pending as it will likely be considered abandoned.



Potential Issues

If your I-765 is pending beyond USCIS's posted processing time and no Request for Evidence has been issued, you can contact USCIS:

- Call the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283 to create a service request.
- Have your receipt notice number ready.
- Note the date, time, representative's name, and referral ID number.

Consult an ISSS advisor immediately if:

- You **do not complete your degree requirements** prior to your program end date on your OPT I-20.
- You want to **cancel** an OPT request before submitting the application to USCIS.
- You want to **withdraw** your OPT application after submitting to USCIS.
- You qualify for cap-gap and require a **cap-gap extension I-20**.



Cap-Gap Extension I-20

Eligibility for Cap-Gap Extension:

A student in F-1 status is eligible for a cap-gap extension of OPT if they:

- Are the beneficiaries of an H-1B cap-subject petition
- The H-1B was filed as a Change of Status
- Their OPT end date is prior to the requested H-1B start date

If eligible, their duration of status (D/S) and any OPT work authorization is extended to April 1 of the fiscal year for which the H-1B status is being requested, *or* until the validity of the approved H-1B cap petitions, whichever is earlier.

An automatic cap-gap extension of a student's F-1 SEVIS record also applies to the duration of status of any dependents in F-2 status.

To request a cap-gap I-20, please complete the **Cap-Gap I-20 Request** e-form available in the [MyISSS portal](#) under the "Training/Employment Related Forms" section. You must have your H-1B receipt or approval notice before completing this request.

(Note: The cap-gap extension terminates automatically if the H-1B change of status petition is denied, withdrawn, or rejected.)



Grace Period After Post-Completion OPT

- There is a **60-day grace period following the completion** of your post-completion OPT for students who maintained status and did not exceed 90 days of unemployment.
 - You are not eligible for employment or to re-enter into the U.S. in F-1 status during the 60-day grace period.
 - During the grace period, you may request to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution if you have been admitted and will begin the program within 5 months.
 - You can apply for a change of status during the grace period



Studying on OPT

- Enrolling in courses while participating in OPT may impact your OPT work authorization.
- **OPT work authorization is terminated when your SEVIS record is transferred** to a new school and/or you begin a program at a new degree level.
- Consult ISSS if you are considering beginning a new course of study or will seek to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.



Career Services

CU Boulder Career Services empowers students and alumni to become more employable and find meaningful work.

- Some Features of Career Services:
 - Mock Interviews
Practice and perfect your interview skills before the real deal.
 - Resume & Cover Letter Help
Our career development advisors can help you create and edit these essential documents for applying to jobs and internships.
 - Career Fairs
Large events where you can meet with a variety of employers all at once to find jobs and internships.



ISSS Workshops & Resources

Attend our **‘So You’ve Applied for OPT... Now What?’**
Workshop

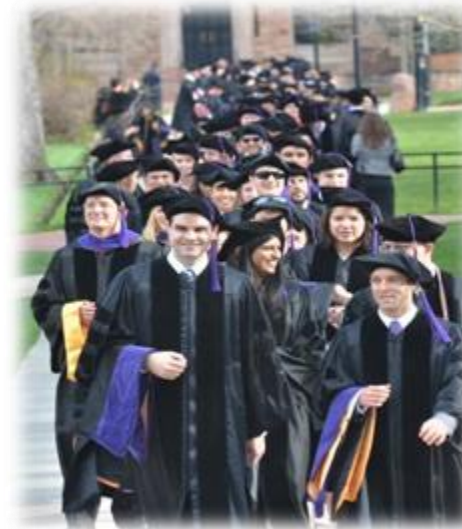
Workshops are available on the [ISSS Programs & Events](#) page

Review our [Post-completion OPT web page!](#)



If you have questions after reviewing our [Post-completion OPT website](#)

- Email your questions to iss@colorado.edu
- Speak to an advisor during [ISSS Advising](#)



Congratulations on completing your degree program at CU Boulder!