

**To:** All SEVIS Users  
**Date:** February 6, 2014  
**Re:** USCIS Student OPT Public Announcement  
**Number:** 1401-05

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## Comments

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## General Information

It has come to the attention of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Service Center Operations (SCOPS) that some recently denied optional practical training (OPT) science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) extension applications were not adjudicated in accordance with applicable Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) OPT policy guidance, resulting in the applications being denied in error. This notice is intended to alert designated school officials who have students whose OPT STEM extension applications may have been so denied, and to provide them with instruction on how to proceed if denied solely due to this discrepancy.

In [SEVP's OPT 2010 Policy Guidance](#), Section 7.2.1 (p. 17-18) states, in part:

*“Unpaid employment. A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for a student on post-completion OPT. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student’s employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.”*

Notwithstanding this guidance, some OPT STEM extension applications were recently denied in error based on the fact that the student applicants intended to work as volunteers or unpaid interns during their extension periods. To prevent this problem from happening again, SCOPS has instructed all USCIS Service Centers to follow ICE SEVP’s OPT Policy Guidance regarding work as a volunteer or unpaid intern.

If a student’s OPT STEM application was denied solely on the basis that he or she intended to work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, the student should contact the Service Center that issued the denial by sending an email message to the applicable dedicated student mailbox (listed below). In the email message, the student should provide his or her full name, as well as his or her USCIS receipt number relating to the denied OPT STEM extension application.

California Service Center: [CSC.StudentEAD@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:CSC.StudentEAD@uscis.dhs.gov)

Vermont Service Center: [VSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:VSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov)

Texas Service Center: [TSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:TSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov)

Nebraska Service Center: [NSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:NSC.Schools@uscis.dhs.gov)

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