



Severe Economic Hardship Work Authorization

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) defines “severe economic hardship” as a financial condition caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student’s control that make it difficult for a student to continue education in the United States.

These financial conditions may include:

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment through no fault of the student.
- Substantial changes in the exchange rate or value of the currency upon which the student depends.
- Inordinate increases in tuition or living costs.
- Unexpected changes in the financial state of the student’s source of support.
- Medical bills.
- Other substantial and unexpected expenses.

If you have unforeseen economic hardship, you may qualify for F-1 severe economic hardship employment authorization. This type of employment authorization allows you to work off-campus, up to a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session, for any type of job that will help you to alleviate the financial hardship. This type of employment authorization requires an application to USCIS with the recommendation and I-20 provided by the Office of International Affairs. Severe economic hardship requires an application to USCIS that is complex and can take 3-6 months to process. Approval is not guaranteed.

Eligibility

- You must be an F-1 student in good standing and have completed at least one academic year of full-time study at the time of application
- You must be able to maintain full-time enrollment and make normal progress toward your degree objective even while working off-campus
- You have a valid, unexpired passport and Form I-20 from North Park University
- You must be able to provide strong evidence and documentation that demonstrates you have severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances (see above)

Additional Information

- You are restricted to 20 hours per week while school is in session, inclusive of any on-campus jobs (for example, if you have an on-campus job at 15 hours per week, you can work only for an additional 5 hours per week); however, full-time employment over 20 hours per week is permitted during break periods when classes are not in session



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- The off-campus job or jobs you accept do not have to be related to your major, but you may not begin employment until you have been authorized to do so by USCIS via receipt of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. Please provide a copy of your card to OIA.
- Employment authorization is typically limited to a maximum of one year at a time or until you complete your program, whichever comes first. You may be eligible to reapply.
- This type of employment authorization does not affect your eligibility for curricular practical training (CPT) or optional practical training (OPT)

Application Materials

- A personal statement describing the unforeseen hardship situation and, if possible, attach backup documentation; for example, news articles, a letter from home telling of a change in family circumstances or proof of a currency devaluation in your country, etc. (*see sample letter on the next page*)
- Completed [Form I-765](#), using the code (C)(3)(iii) at item 16. **Do not** date the form until you are ready to send the application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Please note: the Form I-765 and supporting application materials must be sent to USCIS via mail and cannot be submitted online.
- Copies of your current and all previous I-20s
- Copy of Form I-94. Go to this website <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/> and select “Get Most Recent I-94”. Input your information and print a copy of the Form I-94
- Copy of your passport page showing your biographical information and the expiration date
- Copy of your F-1 visa page or I-797 (approval of change of status to F-1), if applicable
- Two full-face passport style photos. The photos must be identical and in color with a plain background. They must be no more than 30 days old when the I-765 is filed to USCIS. You can take these photos at Walgreens, CVS, etc.
- Copy of your unofficial NPU transcript from [Self Service](#) or an [official transcript copy](#)
- [Form I-765 filing fee](#) (\$520) paid by money order, personal check, cashier’s check, or credit card using [Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions](#). If you pay by check, you must make your check payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
 - *Qualifying students may wish to apply for the [NPU Student Care Program](#) to cover the cost of the application fee. Click the link above to find out more or apply.*
 - *If you do not qualify for the Student Care Program and wish to apply for a Fee Waiver from USCIS, you can find instructions here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-912>. There is a link to the Form I-912 as well as instructions on how to fill it out.*
- New I-20 from OIA – read the next section for instructions



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Application Process

1. You must set up a meeting with the Office of International Affairs to review your application materials and generate a new I-20. The recommendation will be written on page 2 of the new I-20.
2. We will provide you with a scanned copy of the I-20.
3. You must print, sign, and date your name on the I-20
4. Mail all the above documentation, including photos, fee, and I-20 to the correct USCIS address: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses> Note that the address is different, depending on whether you send your application using the postal service or a private carrier (UPS or FedEx)

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03
P.O. Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517



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Sample Letter

USCIS
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

Date

To whom it may concern:

My name is _____ (SEVIS ID N _____) and I would like to apply for permission to work off campus on the basis of severe financial needs. Please review the circumstances surrounding my request for employment based upon economic hardship.

[Explain what has changed that has caused your hardship, like the change in family/sponsor financial circumstances, devaluation of currency, unforeseen medical bills, etc. Be sure to include specific financial information/budget information in this paragraph, as well as attached documentation such as bank statements, medical bills, etc.]

[Explain how you have continued to maintain your good F-1 status, enroll full time and how this is the first time you have applied for employment authorization (only if this is the case, of course.)]

[Explain that the additional employment will assist you in supplementing your income source and identify that other source. Remember that if you have NO other resources, USCIS will deny your employment authorization based on the fact that no one is able to finance full-time coursework and pay for living expenses on income generated from a part-time job.]

[Explain how a denial will cause you great hardship, and the importance of obtaining the degree you are seeking/ how your course of study will help you academically or professionally after you leave the United States.]

Thank you for your kind consideration of my application.

Sincerely,