The Global Perspective

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STEM OPT Regulations

There are several changes proposed for the regulations and practices related to STEM OPT. The regulations have come under additional scrutiny due to a court case involving STEM OPT.

In August 2015, a U.S. District Court found that the 2008 STEM OPT rule was not properly vetted within the normal administrative processes in place for new U.S. regulations. As such, the rule was invalidated. However, the court has allowed a delay in the vacatur of the rule, until May 10, 2016. This means the 2008 rule will not be invalidated until that time, giving the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) more time to create and finalized a new rule.

We do not know when DHS’s revised STEM OPT rule will be published. The Office of International Services will communicate with those students on OPT as soon as more information becomes available. For now, please continue to work on OPT as normal, and if you are eligible to apply for STEM OPT, we encourage you to move forward with that, as well.

What does this mean for students currently on STEM OPT?

DHS is in the process of creating a new STEM OPT rule. We are very hopeful that the new rule will be in effect before the old rule is vacated. Until that time, the STEM OPT rule is in effect and students may continue to work on STEM OPT.

Are students in STEM fields able to apply for the STEM OPT extension?

Yes, students are encouraged to apply for STEM OPT extensions, if eligible.

If a student has already submitted a STEM OPT extension, will DHS continue to process it?

Yes, we believe DHS will continue to adjudicate pending applications for STEM OPT extensions.

The following website has detailed information regarding the progress of this issue: [http://www.nafsa.org/stemopt](http://www.nafsa.org/stemopt)

Additional OPT Changes

Please remember that everyone on OPT is now required to report their employment information to OIS. Lack of employment information in SEVIS will become a reason for auto-termination in the SEVIS system in the next few months. If you are currently on OPT, please be sure your employment information has been reported to OIS by submitting your OPT Report Participation.

Everyone on OPT (post-completion or STEM) should verify that your contact information is up-to-date in My OIS so that we can communicate with you when we receive any updates.
General Tax Information

All individuals present in the US in F or J status during any part of 2015 will have tax filing requirements this April. Even those individuals who did not earn any income will have at least one tax form to complete (Form 8843). Those individuals who are still considered ‘non-residents for tax purposes’ will be able to use an online tax preparation software that OIS has purchased, called Sprintax. You should have received an email with information about Sprintax, including a discount code to be used to pay for the costs of the federal tax return. If you did not receive this email, please contact us at OIS@pitt.edu and we will send it to you.

Be sure to keep any “important tax documents” or documents numbered “W-2”, “1042-S” or “1098-T” that come in the mail until you are ready to prepare your tax paperwork for 2015. Forms 1042-S for the 2015 calendar year may not be distributed to you until mid-March 2016. You should NOT prepare your tax return until you receive your 1042-S. Visit OIS’ Tax Website for definitions of these forms.

OIS Taxes Website

OIS provides some information on our Tax Website including a table to determine if you are a resident or nonresident for tax purposes. Your residency status for tax purposes may be different from your immigration status. Additionally, we have forms, definition of filing requirements, and information about SPRINTAX, a software designed to assist nonresidents for tax purposes to prepare their federal tax returns and Forms 8843.

Tax Assistance and Resources:

OIS staff cannot provide in-person assistance with ANY tax questions, including printing or explaining forms. Staff in OIS are not tax professionals. Please see the website for recommendations for tax professionals.

Questions about Tax Requirements for Nonresidents for Tax Purposes?

Visit OIS’s Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of the Taxes website.
What is Tax-Related Identity Theft?

Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses your stolen Social Security number (SSN) to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund. If you become a victim, the IRS is committed to resolving your case as quickly as possible.

You may be unaware that this has happened until you e-file your return and discover that a return has already been filed using your SSN.

Know the Warning Signs

Be alert to possible tax-related identity theft if you are contacted by the IRS about:

- More than one tax return was filed for you,
- You owe additional tax, have a refund offset or have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return, or
- IRS records indicate you received wages or other income from an employer for whom you did not work

How You can Reduce Your Risk

Join efforts by the IRS, states and tax industry to protect your data. Taxes. Security. Together. We all have a role to play. Here’s how you can help:

- Always use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections. Use strong passwords.
- Learn to recognize and avoid phishing emails, threatening calls and texts from thieves posing as legitimate organizations such as your bank, credit card companies, and the IRS. (These scams have been known to target international visitors.)
- Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or suspicious emails.
- Protect your personal data. Don’t routinely carry your Social Security card, and make sure your tax records are secure.

NOTE: The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels.

Please visit the FTC for more information from the Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week and what to do if you are a victim of identity theft.

Click here to learn your rights when encountering law enforcement and suggested steps to confirm their authenticity (page 9).
Pittsburgh has some wonderful and unique movie theater experiences that can be fun for an individual, a couple, friends, or a family. Here are some of the most distinct experiences you can find in Pittsburgh.

**Classic Movies at Regent Square (Regent Square Theater)**
The [Regent Square Theater](#) shows classic films every Sunday night. Each month has a different theme and all of the movies shown that month share a genre, director, actor, or some other characteristic. Many of the films played have been newly restored. The films are $9 for adults and $7 for students and seniors, but certain movies are shown for free throughout the year (such as *It's a Wonderful Life* in December). All shows are Sundays at 8pm. (*7691 S. Braddock Ave, Regent Square*)

**Breakfast and a Movie (Hollywood Theater)**
Every month, you can enjoy a light brunch and a classic movie on a Sunday at the Hollywood Theater as a part of their [Breakfast and a Movie](#) series. You must order your brunch ticket by the Thursday night before the screening, but you can always see the movie by purchasing your ticket that day. Doors open for the brunch at 10:50am and the film starts at 11:30am. Tickets are $15 for the brunch and the film or $7 for just the movie. (*7005 Potomac Avenue, Dormont*)

**Cine Brunch (Oaks Theater)**
[Cine Brunch](#) is another series that provides brunch with a classic movie. This brunch is catered by the famous [Oakmont Bakery](#) and each film is proceeded by an introduction given by a staff member of the Oakmont Carnegie Library. Again, you must purchase your brunch tickets ahead of time, by 4pm the night before the event. These showings are much less frequent than others listed on this list, so be sure to check their website for the next showing. (*976 Allegheny River Blvd, Oakmont*)

**Sensory Friendly Films (AMC Loew’s Waterfront)**
AMC Theaters host monthly "[Sensory Friendly Films](#)" at their theaters for people affected by Autism. The theater is set-up to have the lights dimmed (but not down all the way), the sound a bit quieter, and children are encouraged to walk around the theater as needed to feel comfortable in their surroundings. This program provides a safe and accepting environment for individuals with these special needs. The films shown are mostly for children in order to have the broadest audience able to see the films. (*966 West Waterfront Dr, West Homestead*)
EXPERIENCES

Met Opera Nights at the Movies  (Select Cinemark Theaters)
Want to see a Metropolitan Opera, but don’t want to drive to New York City this weekend? No problem! Cinemark theaters feature a few showings of Met Operas a month so you can enjoy the opera for a more affordable prices, but still see the same opera stars you would at the Metropolitan! You will also get to see special features such as interviews with the cast and crews and behind the scenes looks at the productions. Tickets are $24 for an adult, but you can get discounted tickets if you purchase more than one of the shows in the Opera series.  (Check website for the closet participating theater.)

Catch a Drive-In (Dependable Drive-In)
Open all 12 months of year, the Dependable Drive-in is the perfect choice for families with young children who aren’t the best at being quiet in a regular theater. You can let your little ones sleep in the back or talk as much as you want in the privacy of your own car. Every movie is shown as a double feature, so you also get two movies for the price of one. In the summer, you can roll your windows down, bring your lawn chairs, or open your hatchback to have a more outdoors movie experience.  
(549 Moon Clinton Road, Moon Township)

Rangos Omnimax Theater 
(Carnegie Science Center)
Many newer movie theaters have IMAX screens, but there are only 50 Omnimax theatres in North America. An Omnimax screen is a four story, egg-shaped dome that creates an experience that truly surrounds you. The films shown on this screen have been filmed with a special camera and, because the subjects of the films are typically nature inspired, you get a unique perspective of volcanoes, caves, rainforests, and more. Right now the Rangos Omnimax Theater is bringing back classic Omnimax films with a new film showing every month. Omnimax films are $8.95 or $6.95 for members, but if you are visiting to also see other attractions at the Carnegie Science Center the price may be discounted.  (One Allegheny Ave, Pittsburgh)

Discounted Tickets Available!
If you have a Pitt ID, don’t forget to ask if you get discounted tickets! Almost every movie theater has discounted tickets for students, but many also offer discounted tickets to anyone with a Pitt ID.
THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Alternative Break is a volunteer opportunity offered to Pitt students during the university Spring Break. Below you will find 5 ways volunteering can help you professionally with additional quotations from a few Pitt students who have participated in the past.

You expand your personal and professional networks
People already working in your target field are great sources of information about job openings, affinity organizations, and people you should meet. And if you have a good experience volunteering, your supervisor might serve as a reference when you’re applying to jobs.

You learn new and transferable skills
Volunteering will help you develop new job skills as well as apply current skills in new ways. For example, a mid-career professional who has worked in concert promotions could use her marketing skills to help an organization with their fundraising or other mission-based events. A college student accustomed to doing research for school assignments could volunteer to research an issue or demographic for a nonprofit. For inspiration about what skills you might share and an overview of some organizations’ current needs, peruse our information about volunteering in the United States or abroad, and search volunteer opportunities around the world.

“I found meeting with community leaders and getting to know a local community was extremely beneficial and a great experience”

You build a track record of work for a specific cause
Nonprofits value dedication to their issue area. By turning your values into action, you will demonstrate to your potential employer that you are committed to—and educated about—their issue of concern.

Hiring managers value volunteerism
Having volunteer work on your resume can help you stand out. In our 2012 “Voices From the Sector” surveys of U.S. organizations and job seekers, almost 65 percent of nonprofit hiring managers said they consider volunteer experience to be at least “somewhat important” when selecting candidates. In our 2013 survey, 76% of respondents said nonprofit experience (working, volunteering, or interning) is important.

“I found meeting with community leaders and getting to know a local community was extremely beneficial and a great experience”

It’s an opportunity for career exploration
Volunteering allows you to try on different organizations, roles, issues, etc., without job-hopping. Of course, volunteering isn’t the same as being on staff, but it can expose you to the work of an organization in a deeper way than becoming a member, following it on Twitter, or even conducting an informational interview with an employee. Want more inspiration? Read how two people turned their volunteer experiences into full-time jobs.

“Additionally, it was an incredibly rewarding experiences”

Information found on idealistcareers.org
A Get-A-Way while giving BACK!

Alternative Break
March 6-12, 2016

Partner SITES

Dayton, Tennessee
Cumberland Trail
Environmental project work in cultivating and maintaining the Trail

Washington, D.C.
Youth Service Opportunities Project
Outreach to the homeless, restoration of the community, and area attractions

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Local Service
Volunteer initiatives to benefit South Side, Wilkinsburg, and East Liberty neighborhoods

Bond, serve, and explore with your fellow Pitt students!

pittserves.pitt.edu
E-mail altbreak@pitt.edu or call 412-624-1065 with questions.
GlobalPittsburgh is a non-profit organization offering year-round activities, networking events, free tickets to events in the city, holiday dinners, and much more to help international students, professionals, and other globally-minded individuals connect with the local community. They have a network of over 500 members, volunteers, and citizen diplomats.

**Intercultural Potluck Dinner for members and host family**

Intercultural Potluck Dinners for Global Pittsburgh paid members and host families are scheduled four times each year. We share ethnic foods (everybody brings a dish), learn about other world cultures, play games and make new friends. Our next potluck dinner scheduled for Saturday, February 20, from 4:00 - 7:00 pm, in Lawrenceville. This event is exclusively for members and hosts who are welcome to bring a friend. To RSVP and to check your membership status please contact Nadya Kessler at nkessler@globalpittsburgh.org.

GlobalPittsburgh Partners With Chatham University

GlobalPittsburgh is pleased to join with the Women’s Institute at Chatham University as a partner in presenting the Raizman Lecture at 6 p.m. on February 23, 2016, featuring Jenny Nordberg, author of "The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan."

Ms. Nordberg, the award-winning journalist, author, and TV producer who broke this story for the New York Times, will speak about Afghan women and girls living with almost no rights and little freedom, but using gender as a form of cultural resistance. Set against the violent backdrop of American's longest war, her book follows Afghan girls who live disguised as boys through childhood and puberty, only to be expected in their teens to transform into subordinate wives and mothers. But some refuse to rescind their male prerogatives in what the UN calls the world’s most dangerous country to be a woman.

Don't miss this chance to hear Jenny Nordberg speak! There will be plenty of time for questions and answers and book signing as well.

If you are interested in attending, please register HERE. The event is free and open to the public.
The Super Bowl (Sunday, February 7, 2016 at 6:30PM) is the year’s biggest spectacle in American sports, if not the entire entertainment industry. Over 100 million people watched the Super Bowl on television last year. The Super Bowl is the championship playoff game of the American National Football League (NFL). In my opinion, the Super Bowl is much more than a game (I’ll get to that later); it’s an EVENT.

If you don’t know anything about American football, or perhaps don’t even like the game, that’s perfectly fine; you WILL be entertained while watching the Super Bowl. Many people watch the Super Bowl in large groups and enjoy lots of food. Since so many people watch the Super Bowl, companies will pay up to $4.5 million (!) for a 30 second advertisement during the broadcast’s first commercial break. Icons in popular music, like Bruno Mars, Beyoncé, and Katy Perry perform a 20 minute concert at the midpoint of the game (Half Time). This year’s Half Time show features Coldplay. Be prepared, though – the game can last about three and a half hours – which is a great reason to gather with friends, try some new foods, and participate in an American tradition.

This year’s Super Bowl is a great matchup between the Carolina Panthers and the Denver Broncos. The Broncos’ Peyton Manning is 39 years old, has won multiple Most Valuable Player awards, and is considered by many pundits to be the best quarterback of all-time. Manning is renowned for his passing accuracy and ability to outmaneuver defenses. However, injuries have limited Manning’s production during the past few years.

The Panthers’ Cam Newton is only 26 years old, but he is the unquestioned leader of the team. He is known for his passing accuracy, along with his outstanding ability to run with the football. The dual threat of his arm and legs gives opposing defenses fits, because they never know if he will throw the ball downfield, or run the ball downfield on his own.

I think that many people would be happy to see Peyton Manning possibly end his career with a Super Bowl victory; others want to see a young star (Newton) showcase his talent on the national stage. I hope that your Super Bowl experience is entertaining and exciting!

NOTES:

- Peyton Manning is known for his sense of humor. So, he appears in advertisements for a few different companies. This compilation is probably his most famous. Also, his appearance on “Saturday Night Live” in 2007 was fantastic!
- Cam Newton is known for his touchdown celebrations. Here are my two favorites:
  - Newton’s Touchdown
  - Newton Celebration (he mimics the comic book character “Superman”)
- Here’s perhaps my favorite Super Bowl commercial of all-time.
FEATURED EVENTS

February 2016

6 2016 Pitt CSSA Chinese New Year Gala 7pm, Alumni Hall
Come celebrate the Year of the Monkey with the Pitt Chinese Student and Scholar Association,

7 16th Annual Alternative Souper Bowl 12pm, Carnegie Library in Oakland
This is a free, live music event where participants are asked to bring non-perishable food and other items to support HEARTH.

7 Super Bowl Sunday 6:30pm, CBS
Watch the American sporting event of the year with friends and tons of food!

10 Priority OPT Session 4pm, O’Hara Student Center, Dining Room
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month period of employment eligibility available to all international students upon completion of their degree. At this workshop you will learn about immigration status issues specific to OPT and also how to apply for OPT.

10 Panel Discussion: Understanding Islam - Voices from Pittsburgh 6:30pm, Community Broadcast Center, 67 Bedford Square, Pittsburgh
This is a community event and free to the public. Advance registration is required.

14 Valentine’s Day
OIS will be your valentine!

21 Lunar New Year Parade 11am, Phillips and Murphy Ave, Pittsburgh

23 Priority OPT Session 4pm, O’Hara Student Center, Dining Room
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month period of employment eligibility available to all international students upon completion of their degree. At this workshop you will learn about immigration status issues specific to OPT and also how to apply for OPT.

24 Pitt Men’s Basketball vs. Louisville 8pm, Petersen Events Center
Come watch the Pitt Men’s Basketball take on the historically strong Louisville and cheer the Panthers to victory.

For more OIS events, please visit the OIS Events page.