

HIRING INTERNATIONAL (F-1) STUDENTS

Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences takes pride in our ability to attract top tech talent from around the world. Our international students comprise over 70% of our student population in the professional [Master of Computer Science \(MCS\)](#), [Master of Software Engineering \(MSWE\)](#) and [Master of Data Science \(MDS\)](#) programs. They have graduated from top universities in their home countries, have unique multiple language capabilities, cross-national perspectives, and functional and industry expertise.

Do not let concerns over the visa processes prevent you from hiring the best and brightest graduates available. U.S. law provides several ways for employers to hire international students and graduates.

Curricular Practical Training and Internships

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) provides students holding an F-1 visa authorization to work at paid, full-time summer internships and part-time jobs after completing the first three quarters of their MCS, MSWE or MDS programs, i.e. the summer before they graduate in December. Employers go through the same process needed for hiring domestic students and are only required to provide an offer letter outlining the details of employment.

- There is no cost to the employer for CPT application.
- Employers do not need to “sponsor” a student for CPT.
- Students are responsible for applying for CPT with requisite paperwork and course enrollment.
- Students need to have a [written job offer or CPT letter](#) before they can apply for CPT.
- Students cannot work on CPT until they have completed 3 consecutive quarters at UCI.

Optional Practical Training and Full-Time Employment after Graduation

Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides students holding an F-1 visa authorization to work in the U.S. for up to 12 months following graduation on either a full-time or part-time basis. MCS, MSWE and MDS students also qualify for OPT STEM Extension and can apply for an additional 24 months of full-time work authorization. Students must obtain a work authorization card (EAD) by graduation from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to be eligible for this option.

- There is no cost to the employer for OPT application.
- Employers do not need to “sponsor” a student for OPT.
- Students are responsible for applying for OPT with requisite paperwork.
- Students do not need an offer letter from an employer, although it is helpful since students need to request an OPT start date 3+ months *before* graduation, which cannot be changed after students submit their OPT applications.
- OPT start date must begin within 60 days of students’ graduation date in December.
- USCIS is currently taking at least 90 days to process OPT applications, which may affect the start date of a recent graduate.

H-1B Visas and Longer Term, Full-Time Employment

During the OPT period, employers can choose to extend a graduate's work assignment by sponsoring them for a work visa. The H-1B is the most popular work visa available to international graduates and provides work authorization in 3-year increments for up to a total of 6 years. The employer must submit a visa petition to the USCIS. Petitions may be submitted as early as April 1 of each year but no sooner than 6 months before the employment start date. Normal processing times can vary. The USCIS offers a 15-day premium processing option for an extra filing fee. Employers can visit <https://www.uscis.gov/> for more information.