



Subject: **IAO ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR MAY AND JUNE**

From: Kathleen McVeigh and Bonnie Garner

Date: 05/04/2009

To: All International F-1 Students, J-1 Scholars, H-1B, O-1, and TN Employees

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

Columbia University Medical Center

Black Building, Room 1-126B, Tel. 305-5455, Walk-in Hours -11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

1. Are You Planning to Travel Outside the U.S. Over the Summer? Are You Traveling to Canada, Mexico (see DOS Travel Alerts, for the Most Updated Information), or the Caribbean? Information for F-1, J-1, H-1B, O-1 and TN is Included in Text

2. Congratulations to All the May Graduates!!!! We wish each of you all the best! If you are staying in the U.S., please see text regarding the 60 day grace period, transfers, extensions and change of status.

3. F-1 Students Completing Their Programs in May, June, or August Should Apply for Optional Practical Training up to 90 days before completion, or no later than 60 days after completion of program

4. Did You Extend Your Status in the US? If so, You May Need to Apply for an Entry Visa Next Time You Travel Abroad

5. If You Are in H-1, J-1, or F-1 Status and You Plan to Transfer to Another University in the United States You Must Either: Transfer Under Portability as an H-1B Employee (please note changes in I-9 processing affecting Portability cases* see Q&A), or as J-1 Research Scholar or F-1 Student You Must Contact the Staff at the IAO to have Your Record Released to the New Institution

6. Tax Deadline for Students and Scholars with No Income is June 15th

7. Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th - The University is Closed

Q&A Section for Those in H-1B Status or Those Interested in Applying for H-1B Status - *What is H-1B portability? How does the New I-9 Requirement Affect H-1B Portability Cases?

In the Last Several Months: Listed below are issues we have discussed in the last weeks or months for your reference: A) **Change of Address?** B) **Updating your Personal Information/Address in the University Self System does Not Update your Information with the IAO.** C) **Immigration Does Not Forward Mail.** D) **Info Pass - How You Can Obtain Information About Pending Cases, Forms, etc..** E) **Applying for a Driver's License?** F) **Instructions are Available at the IAO for J-2 Work Authorization.**

IN NYC AND THE LOCAL AREA – At C.U. there are 2 Great Events You May be Interested in Attending...Star-Gazing! Friday May 15th, 8-10 PM, and the FINAL ISSO BOAT CRUISE, Saturday, May 16th, from 7-10 PM, the events in NYC are endless in May and June, here are just a few examples....

Copies of the Announcements are Available at the IAO

1. Are You Planning to Travel Outside the U.S. Over the Summer? Are You Traveling to Canada, Mexico (see [DOS Travel Alerts, for the Most Updated Information](#)), or the Caribbean? Travel Instructions are Available at the IAO for Those in F-1 and J-1 Status - For general travel outside the U.S., **individuals in J-1 or F-1 status** should carry in addition to their valid passport, all DS-2019 forms or I-20s with valid recertification signatures. Those in **J-1 status** should have their DS-2019 recertified (signed) one time per year. J-1s need to carry a status letter from the department when traveling, a copy of their last three paychecks, or if using personal funds, a current bank statement, or if using outside funding, a copy of the outside funding letter. **If in F-1 status** we suggest you have your I-20 signed one time per semester. Your funding documents should be valid for the current academic year. Students also need to carry a status letter from the IAO and an Academic Certification. **Individuals on H-1B and O-1 status** (and their dependents) should carry in addition to their valid passport, a copy of the I-797 Approval Notice, and the original Permanent Record of their I-797 Approval (lower portion of the I-797), and supporting documentation including a current status letter, and a copy of your last three pay checks. If you are applying for an H-1B or O-1 Entry Visa you will also need your original I-797 approval (top portion of the I-797), a copy of the I-129 petition and supporting documents submitted to Immigration, by the IAO. Please contact the IAO for a copy of these documents. If you need to apply for an entry visa, please see the following website to schedule an appointment at the appropriate consulate: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/questions-embassy.html>. If you extended your status while in the U.S. please see #4.

If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico (see [DOS Travel Alerts, for the Most Updated Information](#)), or the Caribbean for less than thirty days please read – For the most updated information on travel to Mexico please see the Department of State, [Travel Alerts at http://travel.state.gov](#). When planning a trip to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean you need to be in a valid visa status, have a valid passport, and have valid immigration documents, e.g. DS-2019, I-20, I-797 (see general information above). Citizens of some countries will need to apply for a visa to enter Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. Please contact the appropriate consulates for information. If you will be traveling outside the U.S. for less than 30 days you should not give up your I-94 card as you exit the U.S. The exceptions for travel to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean are inherent in Automatic Revalidation, and the retention of your current I-94 card if traveling less than 30 days.

- **Automatic Revalidation:** “Generally an alien must present a valid, unexpired visa in the category for which application for admission is being made, each time he or she enters the U.S. An exception to this rule exists for non-immigrants in **F and J status** who travel for less than 30 days solely to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean (except Cuba). The visas of such aliens are considered to be “extended” to the date of re-entry, eliminating the need to obtain a new visa at a U.S. consulate before that particular entry. This benefit also applies to non-immigrants who have changed non-immigrant status in the U.S., and whose visa is still in the category in which they entered the U.S. In that case, the visa is considered “converted” to the proper visa category as well as “extended” to allow for reentry (NAFSA 2005).”
Non-immigrant aliens in H-1B, O-1, and TN status can travel only to Canada and Mexico under Automatic Revalidation; they cannot travel to the Caribbean, or Cuba. Citizens of Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, or Libya do not qualify for Automatic Revalidation and thus, must present a valid visa for your current status. **Please Note** that if you apply for an entry visa while in Canada, **Mexico***, or the Caribbean, you must wait for the visa to be issued before you return. If your visa

application is denied, you are not allowed to use "automatic revalidation" to return to the U.S. and must travel to your country of citizenship to apply for an entry visa.

Do I need a Visa to Enter Canada or Mexico?

Canadian Visas: At present, individuals from many countries are required to obtain a Canadian Visa when entering Canada from the U.S. Visas may be obtained from the Canadian Consulate General at 1251 Avenue of the Americas (at 50th Street), please call (212) 596-1628 for information. Please consult the Canadian Consulate General for visa regulations concerning your country before making travel arrangements.

Mexican Visas: Tourists Cards or Visas may be required for travel to Mexico. Please contact the New York Consulate General of Mexico, at 27 East 39th Street, or please call (212) 217-6400 for additional information **Quoting the DOS website** **Effective April 28, all nonimmigrant visa operations at all consular posts in Mexico will be suspended until May 6... Please refer to Embassy Mexico's web page at <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/main.html> for the latest information on closings and service reductions. Please continue to see DOS website for information on travel and for the most recent alerts.*

2. **Congratulations to All the May Graduates!!!!** *We wish each of you all the best! If you are completing in May, June, or August you should either:* A) Leave the U.S. in the 60 day grace period following completion of your program, B) Apply for Optional Practical Training 90 days before your program end-date or within the 60 day grace period (please see # 3), C) Transfer to another University (please see #5), or D) Apply for a Change of Status, e.g. H-1B1 etc. Please contact the staff at the IAO with any questions you may have, and again, Congratulations!

3. **F-1 Students Completing Their Programs in May or June Should Apply for Optional Practical Training in March, or up to 90 days before completion, or no later than 60 days after completion of program** - Optional Practical Training is defined as employment in your field of study. *You do not have to have a job offer to apply. However, during your OPT you must be employed. Unemployment is allowed only up to 90 days during the 12 months of OPT.* You are allowed one year of full-time employment in your field of study **for each successive degree earned (e.g. BS, and MS)**. You may take part-time OPT during the academic year; this time will count against the one-year total. You have a 5month period in which to apply for post completion OPT. You may apply 90 days before the completion of your program, and up until 60 days after completion. You must be in the U.S. at the time the application is submitted to Immigration. You may request a start date in the 60 day period following completion. Currently the IAO's processing time for a complete application is approximately one week. Immigration's processing time may be as much as 90 days or more. If you plan to travel outside of the U.S. following completion of your program, you should have the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) before you travel. Please contact the IAO if you need to travel and have not received the EAD. You must have received the EAD before you begin employment. The IAO and the ISSO are working together with reporting requirements for students on Post Completion Practical Training. You must comply with reporting requirements through the ISSO to maintain status while in Optional Practical Training. More information will be made available to you by the IAO at the time you plan to apply for OPT.

4. **Did You Extend Your Status in the U.S.? If So, You May Need to Apply for An Entry Visa Next Time you Travel Abroad** - If you extended your H-1B, O-1, J-1, F-1 status (this applies to the dependents as well) while inside the U.S. and your entry visa has expired, you have not violated your status. However, next time you exit the U.S. to travel abroad, in countries other than Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean* (see #1), you

will need to apply for, and obtain a valid entry visa, to re-enter the U.S. Please see the following website to schedule an appointment at the appropriate consulate:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/questions_embassy.html.

5. If You Are in H-1B, J-1, or F-1 Status and You Plan to Transfer to Another University in the U.S. You Must Either: Transfer Under Portability as an H-1B Employee (see discussion of Portability below in H-1B Q&A), or as an F-1 Student or J-1 Research Scholar You Must Contact the Staff at the IAO to have Your Record Released to the New Institution - Both portability and transfers to other institutions should be seamless, there should be no gap in dates. For example, you should end your employment at CU on June 30th, and begin employment or research at the next institution on July 1st. The days of the week are unimportant, but sponsorship dates should be consecutive. In both cases of portability and transfer the applicant should report to the International Office, or sponsors office, on the date of hire or transfer. You should have all your documents with you, passport, DS-2019s, I-20s, and I-94 card. If possible please notify the IAO one to two months before you plan to transfer.

6. Tax Deadline for Students and Scholars with No Income is June 15th - If you had no income in 2008, you must complete IRS Form 8843 and post no later than June 15th.

7. Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th - The University will be Closed

Q&A Section for Those in H-1B Status or Those Interested in Applying for H-1B Status - ***What is H-1B portability? How does the New I-9 Requirement Affect H-1B Portability Cases?** Portability is the process which allows the transfer of H-1B status from one employer to another (this also includes concurrent employment); to utilize portability you must be currently employed, and have an I-797 approval valid into the future at the time in which the new employer submits the I-129 petition to Immigration. Portability allows non-immigrants currently in H-1B status to begin employment with a new employer as soon as a complete I-129 petition for the new employer has been received by Immigration. However, new I-9 requirements now require the new employer to have the I-797 receipt of the submitted case in hand for the completion of an I-9. Currently employers can expect to receive the I-797 receipt from Immigration in 10-14 days. Please contact the staff at the IAO for additional information.

In the Last Several Months: *Due to on-going changes in immigration that effect the nonimmigrant population at CU, **we will reiterate issues discussed in previous announcements, for your reference.** **We are required to report specific information (events) to USCIS or the State Department for Students in F-1 status or J-1 Research Scholars (and all family members) within a 10-30 day window of their occurrence.** Please read the announcements regularly and let us know if you have a change in address, plan to transfer to another institution, change your program of study or research, or if you have a change in funding source. If you are in F-1 or J-1 status and you need information on the events that we are required to report to Immigration about your status, please refer to initial information given to you by the IAO, or stop by the IAO for that information. Important information discussed in recent announcements is as follows: A) **Change of Address?** All F-1, J-1, H-1B, O-1, and TN, students, scholars, and employees **must report a change of address to the IAO within 10 days of moving.** **F-1 Students and J-1 Research Scholars do not have to complete the AR-11 or the AR-11SR.** The IAO will notify Immigration through the SEVIS System when you report a change of address to the IAO. **This is a time sensitive issue. You have 10-days to report a change of address to the IAO.** If you are in H-1B, TN, or O-1 status you must complete an AR-11 form; please see <https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=coa> and*

please print the change of address confirmation and retain for your records. **B) Updating Your Personal Information/Address in the University Self- Service System does not Update your Information with the IAO** - The IAO is on a separate server and thus, you will need to notify the staff at the IAO of your new address in addition to using the University Self-Service System at <http://my.columbia.edu>. Please notify the IAO within 10 days of your moving. **C) Immigration Does Not Forward Mail** - If you have correspondence pending with the USCIS and you move, you need to notify Immigration ASAP. Immigration will not forward mail. All correspondence will be returned to Immigration, even if you have filed a request with the U.S. Postal Service to forward your mail to your new address. If you have a case pending at immigration, you should file the change of address online (see A. above) and we also recommend that you contact the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 and give them your new address. **You are required to notify the IAO and Immigration within 10 days of moving.** **D) Info Pass - How Can You Obtain Information About Pending Cases, Forms, etc.?** Info Pass is an internet-based appointment system that enables the public to schedule appointments with Immigration Information Officers at select USCIS local and district offices. For more information please see the USCIS Fact Sheet at: <http://uscis.gov> (see Info Pass). Please speak with the staff at the IAO before scheduling an appointment - in some cases the IAO can provide the same information and save you a trip to the district office. **E) Applying for a Driver's License? If You are in H-1B or O-1 Status You'll need the Original I-797 Approval Notice to Apply for a Driver's License (a copy will not suffice)** If you made a change of status to H-1B in the U.S., or completed an extension of H-1B status, the top portion of your original I-797 should be at the IAO. Please pick up the original before going to the Department of Motor Vehicles to apply for your driver's license. **If you are in F-1, J-1, TN, O-1, or PR status** please take your original documents to the DMV. Please see the NY or NJ State DMV websites for additional documentation you will need at <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/> or <http://www.state.nj.us/mvc/>. **F) Instructions are Available at the IAO for J-2 Work Authorization** - you can pick up the instructions and the I-765 form in the display holders, on the wall outside the IAO.

IN NYC AND THE LOCAL AREA

There are 2 Great Events You May be Interested in Attending at C.U. in May ...Star-Gazing and Lecture! Friday May 15, 2009, 9:00-11 PM, Pupin Hall, Morningside Campus, please see <http://outreach.astro.columbia.edu/>, and the FINAL ISSO BOAT CRUISE, Saturday, May 16th, from 7-10 PM - "The ISSO is organizing a Sunset Boat cruise around NY Harbor and the Statue of Liberty on Saturday night May 16th. Normally, this annual boat cruise (since 1991) takes place at the beginning of the academic year in early September, but this year it was cancelled due to extreme weather conditions, so we are going to celebrate the end of the academic year instead! For many of you, you can celebrate your graduation with friends and family, as well. Due to budget cuts, the ISSO will not be able to offer this event in the future, so it's now or never!" (ISSO) For more information please see the ISSO Calendar of Events at: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/calendar/calendar.htm>. **In NYC in May and June** there are so many events in NYC, listed here are just a few: **AIDS Walk NY, Sunday, May 17th**, call (212) 807-WALK or see www.aidswalk.net/newyork. Throughout the Memorial Day Weekend, the harbors are full of naval vessels and in the streets of NYC you'll see lots of sailors in what's called **Fleet Week**. Check out the **NY Times, am NY**, for events and places to visit, such as the: **Puerto Rican Day Parade, Met Opera in the Parks, Bike Tours, HBO/Bryant Park Film Festival, and Midsummer Night Swing Dance Festival at Lincoln Center, events in Central Park, and the Bronx Zoo...**

Copies of the Announcements are Available at the IAO
