

Important Immigration Information for International Students Spring 2016!

Dear International Students,

We hope your Spring semester is going well! This message is to remind you about immigration regulations, university procedures and other issues that may affect your work, travel and other plans. Our apologies for the length, but the information is important, so please read it and keep it for future reference! If you have questions, you can email us at iadvisor@unm.edu, come in during walk-in hours (between 1 and 3 pm, Monday through Friday or Mondays and Thursdays 10 -12) or call for an appointment at 277-4032.

This message answers these questions:

- 1) WHAT'S NEW?? (AND when can I see an advisor?)**
- 2) I'm graduating soon, when do I need to apply for work permission to work after study?**
- 3) How many classes do I have to stay enrolled in?**
- 4) Is there any information I need to update with GEO now?**
- 5) When and where can I work?**
- 6) What do I have to do when I travel both inside and out of the US?**
- 7) What happens if I don't want to be a student anymore?**
- 8) It's tax time. What do I have to do about taxes?**
- 9) How do I find out about international social events, trips, workshops and other information/activities?**

1) WHAT'S NEW?? (AND when can I see an advisor?)

- a. Immigration: If you are a continuing student and you have not yet picked up your new format I-20 or DS-2019 form, you **MUST** do this before July 1st, 2016. The new I-20 does not have a bar code on the top right corner. If you travel out of the US this summer, you may not be allowed to return, so please come in to pick it up as soon as possible!
- b. Health insurance: Students who are not covered by a graduate assistantship, athletic scholarship, government/agency-sponsored insurance or who are not in F1 or J1 status. **MUST** either enroll in the UNM Student Health Insurance Plan or buy a different policy and waive the UNM student health insurance Plan. You **MUST** do this **BEFORE** February 20th!!! Please refer to the instructions sent to you on January 23rd or visit our website for more information at: http://geo.unm.edu/health_insurance_student.html

Health Insurance issues for Tax Residents and Dependents

If you have been in the US in student status in more than 5 calendar years you are technically required to buy insurance that meets the "Affordable Care Act" or ACA requirements (this is the "Obama Care" law). If this applies to you or if you have dependents (spouse and children) please note that all individuals on visas are eligible to buy insurance policies from the New Mexico Health insurance exchanges. Individuals were supposed to enroll by January 31st to get coverage for this year. However, you may still qualify under special circumstances found here: <http://www.bewellnm.com/HEALTH-INSURANCE-BASICS/special-enrollment-life-changes>.

For information about immigration status and eligibility refer to:

<https://www.healthcare.gov/immigration-status-and-the-marketplace/> If you meet income guidelines, your children under 19 and any pregnant women can apply for Medicaid under current regulations. No adults on visas who are NOT pregnant women can qualify for

Medicaid. If you want to apply for Medicaid for your children or a pregnant woman, you must go to the New Mexico Human Services Department, Income Support Division. The closest office is at: 4330 Cutler Ave NE (Tel: 505-222-9200). You may be told you are not eligible. If so, you should refer the individual to the memo that verifies New Mexico's policy on eligibility for legal immigrants (you may want to print this out and bring it with you): http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/health_insurance_medicaid.pdf

Before accepting any public benefits as a person on a visa, you should check that you are not subjecting yourself to "public charge" provisions that make you ineligible for a future visa or admission to the US. **In general**, accepting non-cash benefits is not considered to subject you to being a public charge. This information can be found on the USCIS website at: <http://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-processes-and-procedures/public-charge> and in the State Department's Foreign Affairs Manual notes on Public Charge at: <http://www.hooyou.com/i-485/9%20FAM%2040.41%20notes.pdf>

c. New GEO website: The GEO website will change before the end of this month. Hopefully you will find the site easier to navigate. Please check it out in March!

d. Upcoming Special Events: If you want to find out about GEO Events and Activities, join the "UNM GEO Activities" Facebook group or sign up for the GEO listserv (instructions at the end of this message). The Ski trip is coming up on February 21st, the first Thursday of the month are "Thirstday" social hours, and International Festival sign-ups will start this month, so please come out to make friends and socialize with your fellow students!

e. Workshops: Our culture workshops began last week and will continue for two more weeks and there are many other workshops and activities on our spring calendar at: <http://geo.unm.edu/calendar.html> (click on the title bar to view details for the event.) Workshop topics include: My life in ABQ, Staying Sane, Internships and Job Shadowing Opportunities, and how to do your taxes. Reminders go out at least one week and then the day before each workshop.

f. Advisor walk-in hours: If you would like to speak to an advisor for a brief question, get a travel signature or apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) you can come in any afternoon (Monday – Friday) between 1:00 and 3:00pm. You can also come in on Mondays and Thursdays from 10 to 12. If you would like to meet an advisor outside of those hours, you **MUST** call for an appointment at 277-4032.

g. Upcoming deadlines: If you would like to apply for work permission following your program of study you should be downloading and completing the applications for these permissions now (read the next section of this email). If you are an F1 student completing your studies this semester, you need to schedule an appointment **NOW** to meet with a GEO advisor to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Information and instructions are here: http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/OPT.pdf You do not need to have a job to apply. Students on J1 visas who are completing studies this semester should be looking for an Academic training job now (J1 students must have jobs to apply). Information about Academic Training can be found here: http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/Academic_Training_J-1.pdf

h. GEO is open Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm for submitting requests or dropping off and picking up documents

2) I'm graduating soon, when do I need to apply for work permission to work after study?

If you are an F1 student who will complete your academic program in Spring 2016, and you want to work in the US following your program of study you should apply for work permission by March at the latest (your work permission is called Optional Practical Training, or OPT). F1 students do NOT need to have a job to apply. Current USCIS processing times for OPT are about 3 months, but they could take longer. You SHOULD apply for OPT before you complete your last academic requirement at the latest (note that this will be BEFORE your actual graduation date). Information about OPT is at: http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/OPT.pdf

If you are a J1 student, you should apply for work permission as soon as you have a job offer (your work permission is called Academic Training, or AT). J1 students must have a job to apply. J1 students are REQUIRED to apply before their program ends (J-1 students: see an advisor if you are nearing your program end date and you are looking for, but have not yet found employment). Information about Academic training is at: http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/Academic_Training_J-1.pdf

Remember that immigration considers all students to have “completed” the program when they hand in the final requirement for the degree. Those who have completed all degree requirements will need to apply for work permission EVEN IF they have not yet graduated. If you do apply, remember that you are still in F1 or J1 student status while on this work permission and will need to continue to update your address and work information with GEO. If you plan to work on campus after the end date on the front of your I-20/DS-2019 you will need to show your OPT employment card or AT letter to the payroll office and OGS or Student Employment to continue working at UNM.

For more information on how to apply for student work permission check out our website information: http://geo.unm.edu/working_US.html

3) How many classes do I have to stay enrolled in?

International students are REQUIRED to COMPLETE each semester with a full course load. This means that for immigration purposes undergraduate students must complete each semester with 12 or more credit hours. Graduate students must complete each semester with 9 or more credit hours or 6 credit hours if they hold an assistantship for more than half of the semester. Undergraduate students with the Amigo Scholarship have to enroll in 15 credit hours. Graduate students may be required by their departments to enroll in more hours according to departmental requirements.

Grades of W (Withdrawal) or Audit DO NOT count toward the full-time requirement. Also, no more than 3 credit hours of the full-time requirement can be in **on-line courses** (you can take more than that, but you must have enough hours in “In person” courses as well).

GEO is required to report drops below full-time to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 21 days, so please come in and speak to a GEO advisor if you have questions about whether dropping a class will put you below full-time BEFORE you drop.

EXCEPTIONS: If you are a graduate student and have completed all course requirements other than your thesis or dissertation, we can consider you as full-time for immigration purposes at fewer than the full-time hours listed above as long as you bring us a form each year from your academic advisor stating that you have completed all other degree requirements. This form can be found at http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/requirements.pdf Please fill it out and bring it in if

this applies to you. If you are an undergraduate in your final semester and you need fewer than 12 hours to graduate, we can consider you full-time with a letter from your academic advisor stating what courses you are taking and that those courses represent your final degree requirements. Other exceptions may be granted under specific academic or medical circumstances, but they must be authorized IN ADVANCE by an international advisor, so please come in to speak with us AS SOON AS you perceive there is a problem!

We are contacting students now who are not enrolled full-time. Please respond promptly if you are contacted about your full-time enrollment!

4) Is there any information I need to update with GEO now?

a. Address changes - Remember that all international students and scholars are required to report address changes to the Global Education Office (we must report this information to the government within 21 days). You can inform us of these changes via email to iadvisor@unm.edu or come in and let us know. We do NOT get notification if you update the address information on-line through the my.unm website, so please continue to send us email or come in until we inform you otherwise, but do it at my.unm.edu as well.

b. Program changes – If you declare your major, change major, change level of study or make any other changes in your academic program as indicated on the I-20/DS-2019, you will need to come in to get a new I-20/DS-2019. Supporting documents needed vary according to the type of change. Please speak with an advisor for details.

c. Financial changes – If you change your source of funding (e.g. from personal funds to an assistantship or vice versa), you will need to get a new I-20 to indicate this change. You do not need to get a new I-20 just for tuition increases or annual expense increases.

5) When and where can I work?

a. On-Campus Employment – On campus work is work paid for by UNM or an employer that is on campus and provides services to students. Students in legal F-1 or J-1 immigration status are permitted to work up to 20 hours per week in “on-campus employment” during the Fall and Spring semesters. During the Christmas and Summer vacations, students can work on-campus full time (40 hours per week or 30 if you are enrolled for classes). Students are NOT authorized to work more than 20 hours during fall and spring breaks.

Students who want to work must apply for a Social Security Number (if they don't have a number already) and then take their employment paperwork along with all immigration documents to the Student Employment office or the Office of Graduate Studies if the job is a graduate-level assistantship. They will also need to complete on-line information in the payroll system once they have the Social Security Number (email will be sent from Payroll.)

Students without SSNs need to come and get a form from GEO in order to begin the on-campus employment process. This form will be signed by your job supervisor and GEO. J-1 students also MUST report their employer and any changes in on-campus employer(s) to a GEO advisor.

b. Off-campus Employment

International students who want to work off-campus for any reason are required to obtain off-campus employment permission BEFORE BEGINNING EMPLOYMENT. Employment must be

in your field of study to be authorized. For more information about how to qualify for off-campus employment, please read the information at: http://geo.unm.edu/working_US.html then come to visit a GEO advisor during our walk-in hours for questions, Mon-Fri, 1-3, and Mondays and Thursdays from 10am - noon. Note that applications for Optional Practical Training (OPT) cannot be completed during walk-in hours – you will need to schedule an appointment by calling 277-4032.

c. Other employment during study: F1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or J1 Academic Training Students can sign up for the Career Services Coop program and then apply for F1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or J1 Academic training to work in off campus employment or for more than 20 hours in an on campus position that is directly related to your field of study provided you otherwise meet all the requirements. The last day to apply for COOP for this semester is Friday, February 19th, although the Coop coordinator may be willing to make exceptions for those who find an internship later. Please be sure to read the information at: http://geo.unm.edu/working_US.html and bring in all relevant supporting documents in order to get the authorization. Talk to an advisor during walk-in hours (M-F 1-3, and Mondays and Thursdays from 10am - noon) NOW if you have questions about any type of employment.

d. Employment end date

All on campus employment and CPT permission end when you end your program - Remember if you complete or terminate your program you are no longer eligible for employment either on or off campus unless you have obtained post-completion employment authorization from a GEO advisor prior to completing your program. GEO is required to notify Student Employment, the Office of Graduate Studies and the Payroll Office when a student completes the program or falls out of status and these offices will have to terminate your employment until you can demonstrate alternative work authorization documents. See a GEO advisor if you have any questions about this process.

6) What do I have to do when I travel both inside and out of the US?

a. Domestic Travel - If you travel outside of Albuquerque, bring your passport, I-94 and I-20/DS-2019 with you. There are many immigration checkpoints throughout the US where you could be asked for these documents. Technically, all F and J students are required to carry the I-94 at all times while in the US. Students are rarely asked for the I-94 in Albuquerque.

b. Required Documents – In order to return from outside of the US, all students are required to have a SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 that has been SIGNED FOR TRAVEL BY A GEO ADVISOR WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS (see below)! Remember that you will also need a passport that is valid for at least 6 months into the future as well as a valid visa to reenter the US (exceptions to the valid visa rule exist for travel to Mexico or Canada for less than 30 days, for some individuals - check with an advisor if you have questions). It is a good idea for students to bring a copy of a current transcript and proof of funds to demonstrate that they are still in their academic program.

c. Required Signatures - All students are required to have a travel signature on their I-20/DS-2019 from a GEO advisor that is LESS THAN 6 MONTHS OLD at the time of reentry to the US. For F1 students, this signature should be on page 3 of your I-20 (page 2 is instructions), for J1 students, this signature is at the bottom right-hand corner of page 1 of the DS-2019 form. Please check your I-20/DS-2019. If you need a new signature, bring it in at least one week before you need to travel. If you bring it in any time other than advisor walk-in hours, you will

need to leave it in our office and return 3 days later to pick it up. Bring your passport, visa and any other documents that may have been updated since we last saw you in order to get the signature.

d. SEVIS fee – All students in F1 or J1 status have had to pay a mandatory SEVIS fee. Students who are continuing in F1 or J1 status do NOT need to pay this fee again unless they fall out of status or change to another status and want to get into F1 or J1 status. If a person applies to change to F1 or J1 status while in the US he or she must also pay the fee. Those of you who plan to travel and who need to apply for a visa while abroad should be sure to bring all of your old I-20s and DS-2019 forms with you as well as your SEVIS fee receipt if you have one. For more detailed information on the SEVIS fee, visit the SEVIS website at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis>

e. Visa Requirements – If your visa is currently expired and you travel out of the US, you will have to apply for a new visa to return to the US (if you will travel only to Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days, and your visa is expired, you may not need a new one, check with an advisor for details about who does not need a valid visa to reenter after a visit of less than 30 days to Canada or Mexico). The State Department requires personal interviews for all first-time F and J visa applicants. Many consulates also require a personal interview for renewing F and J visa applicants. If you are applying for a visa please contact the US consulate or embassy in advance to check for visa application procedures as they may have changed from when you first applied. Some consulates are reporting that it can take up to 2 months to get an appointment, so in most cases you need to schedule the appointment well in advance and plan your trip so that you will have enough time to complete the visa application process. Also, many more students are now being subjected to random security checks by the consulate, which could delay issuance of the visa. Processing times for security checks are usually no longer than 1 month, but you need to plan accordingly. Most consulates will let you schedule the appointment via the web. You can find all US consulates on the following website: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

f. Applying for a visa at the Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico - While applying for the visa in Juarez, Mexico can be convenient, a denial presents significant problems for students who are NOT from Mexico. In addition, both the state department and the University of New Mexico have issued travel warnings/statements cautioning individuals about travel to Mexico. If you need to apply for a new visa, we recommend that you do it in your home country. If you are considering applying in Mexico, you should speak with a GEO advisor before you make the appointment with the consulate. We do NOT recommend this option.

g. Visa applications for those with previous arrests or convictions – provisions in the Department of State's Foreign Affairs Manual (9 FAM 40.11 N11) affect international students who have previous arrests or convictions for alcohol and drugs (among other crimes). Students who have arrests for DUI (even if you were not convicted) or any drug related charges should consult an advisor for information about the effect on your student status and definitely speak with an advisor before applying for a visa!

7) What happens if I don't want to be a student anymore?

We request that all students who are leaving UNM complete our leaving form at: http://geo.unm.edu/all_handouts/leaving_unm_form.pdf

If you are leaving UNM before the end date on your I-20/DS-2019, you should come in and speak with an advisor during walk in hours. At a minimum, we ask that you inform our office via email or in-person of when you plan to leave, whether you are graduating or leaving before you complete your program. If you will be transferring to another institution, you will need to meet with a GEO advisor during walk in hours to complete an immigration transfer. If you are returning to your home country, changing immigration status, or becoming a permanent resident in the US you will also need to inform our office. Keeping us informed about any changes in your immigration status will allow us to update the information in SEVIS and the student system so that you do not have any future trouble when trying to re-enter or leave the US or during your studies at UNM.

8) It's tax time. What do I have to do about taxes?

We will be sending out a message in the next two weeks with specific information about tax requirements. All international students who were present in the US during 2015 and each of their dependents (wife and children) will have to complete a form for 2015 and mail it to the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) by Friday, April 15, 2016. We will have a two-hour workshop for students on Wednesday, March 2, 2016 from 4:00 – 6:00 pm and will be doing individual tax advising through our volunteers in tax assistance (VITA) site on Thursday and Friday afternoons from March 10th through April 8th, 2016. We are currently looking for volunteers to go through tax training. If you are willing to volunteer at least 14 hours of your time (6 for training and 8 for helping others), please contact Linda Melville at iadvisor@unm.edu. Please put "Tax Volunteer" in the Subject line.

9) How do I find out about GEO social events, trips, workshops and other information/activities?

a. Website - All of our handouts and information for international students can be accessed and downloaded from the "International Students" section of the site. Social event and activity information can be found under the "Activities and Events" section. The web address is http://geo.unm.edu/activities_events.html. The complete calendar of GEO events can be viewed by clicking on the GEO Calendar link from the GEO homepage. The URL is: <http://www.geo.unm.edu/calendar.html>

b. Email – Remember that important email messages such as information about immigration deadlines or issues, taxes, and GEO workshops will be sent via direct email from iadvisor@unm.edu. If you are subscribed to the international student listserve you will also get email from geo@unm.edu. Please be sure to read the email that comes from iadvisor@unm.edu as it may contain critical information of importance to your student status. For those who want to subscribe to the optional International Student listserve to get information about social hour and other events or to see what students are advertising, please read the instructions below. If you wish to unsubscribe, you must follow the directions below.

To subscribe:

- Send a message from your email account to: listserv@unm.edu
- Leave the subject field of the message blank
- Type in the body of the message: subscribe intlstud-L Firstname Lastname

To unsubscribe:

- Send a message from your email account to: listserv@unm.edu
- Leave the subject field of the message blank

-Type in the body of the message: unsubscribe intlstud-L

c. Facebook: The “UNM GEO Activities” facebook group will announce all geo activities and events

Have a great spring semester and please contact us if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Your GEO advisors