



International Student & Scholar Services

Work Permission Due to Severe Economic Hardship

As an F-1 student, you may be eligible to apply to the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship. This program allows you to work in any kind of off-campus part-time employment while school is in session and full-time during school breaks. *You must also maintain a full course of study during the fall and spring semesters.*

Eligibility Requirements:

There are four basic requirements to be eligible for this program:

- (1) You must have maintained legal status for at least one academic year (nine consecutive months),
- (2) You must be in current legal status for at least one academic year (nine consecutive months),
- (3) You must have made a good faith effort to find employment on-campus.
- (4) You must demonstrate unforeseen severe economic hardship and explain why other employment options are unavailable or insufficient. This would be an ‘event’ that occurred after your coming to the United States and that was beyond your control as an F-1 student. Examples of such an ‘event’ could be “loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student’s source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.” Another example would be death of the student’s sponsor. **Please note: If you are a transfer student from another U.S. school where you had an Economic Hardship EAD card, you will lose that Economic Hardship EAD card upon transferring to Southern Methodist University or to any other school.**

STEP ONE: Please collect the following documents:

- A letter from you requesting work authorization and explaining the unforeseen ‘event’ that has occurred since your arrival to the U.S. that requires you to seek employment authorization and that other employment options are unavailable or insufficient (original and 2 copies).
- A notarized letter from your sponsor, explaining the reasons he/she cannot fully support you at this time and why the situation was unforeseen, if applicable. In the case of death of a sponsor, a letter from another family member or friend explaining this situation must be supplied (original and 2 copies).
- Any other documentation, which supports your case proving that the ‘event’ happened, when it happened, and that it was beyond your control. (original and 2 copies)
- Form I-765 will be completed during your appointment (<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>) Question 16 should be completed as follows: (c) (3) (iii).
- Two passport pictures
- 3 copies of most recent I20 document, valid passport (including name, picture, and expiration date), visa, and I-94 card (front and back).
- Cashier’s check or money order made out to ‘USCIS’. (Check the amount on this website: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>)
- 3 copies of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) cards, if applicable.

STEP TWO: Make an appointment with an International Student Advisor. Call 214-768-4475 or email smuint@smu.edu

In a few weeks from the date of mailing the application, a “Notice of Action” form indicating that your application has been received will be sent to the SMU International Office. If approved, your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card will be sent to the International Office for you to pick up. We will contact you by email once the EAD card arrives. A copy of the card will be made and placed in your file.

****Warning: Be sure you do not begin employment until you have received your EAD card and the start date has occurred. Under no circumstances should you work pas the EAD card end date, unless you have already applied for and received a new EAD card and the start date has occurred. Any work without authorization is a serious violation of immigration law.**