

Applying for OPT or Academic Training

If you're an F-1 or J-1,

you may be thinking about working in the U.S. after you graduate. Did you know that Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Academic Training (AT) can be an amazing opportunity for you to gain valuable work experience and jumpstart your career after graduation? OPT and AT are benefits for F-1 and J-1 students respectively that typically allow work authorization in the United States for up to 12 months (OPT) and 18 months (AT) after graduation.

Professionally, culturally, and even on a personal level, you can gain a lot from participating in OPT and AT. Here are just a few reasons to consider applying:

- it allows you to gain real-world work experience in your field of study. This can be incredibly valuable when applying for jobs after your OPT/AT period ends.
 - it can also help you develop some important professional skills such as communication, time management, how to work in a team.
 - it can also give you the opportunity to network with professionals in your field and potentially even secure other job offers.
 - it can give you an idea of what it's like to work in your field and in the U.S.
- Finally, OPT and AT can be a great way to explore your career options through real-world experience, and the skills you will have gained

can benefit you when determining the next stage of your career.

If you're an international student who's interested in participating in OPT or AT, be sure to attend one of our employment workshops (OPT or J-1 Employment) to learn about the application process and eligibility requirements. A lot of doors can open for you with OPT and AT, and we at OISS are happy to guide you through the process!

--The OISS Team



Interested in applying for OPT or AT? Start here:

Look for an upcoming OPT or J-1 Employment workshop listed on our website.

Check out our OPT and AT guides on our website.

Head over to TC NEXT for career development tools.

Applying for OPT/AT



Start early:

The OPT application process can take several months (14 business days or more for OISS to process your request + up to 90 days for USCIS processing), so it's important to prepare early. Be sure to gather all the required documents and information as soon as possible to avoid any delays.

Understand the eligibility requirements:

For both OPT and AT, you must be in good academic standing and pursue an employment opportunity that is related to your program of study. There are many more eligibility requirements: be sure to review our OPT page and AT pages, and do register for a workshop.

Talk to OISS:

Our advisors can provide valuable guidance and support throughout the OPT/AT application processes. For OPT applicants, we require that you submit a draft of I-765 so that we can give you feedback and help you correct any errors, so please do read our responses carefully.

Double-check the application instructions:

Before submitting your application to USCIS, double-check you have followed all of the instructions, and that everything is filled out accurately. Any errors or omissions could delay the processing of your application.

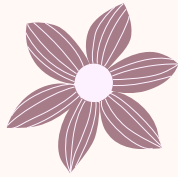
Plan ahead for your job search:

It's important to start planning ahead for your job search so that you can maximize your time on OPT and AT. Consider attending job fairs, and networking events. A great place to start is with TC NEXT.

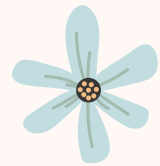
A desk setup with a notebook, a pen, a cup of coffee, and a bouquet of pink roses.

*"Choose a job you love,
and you will never have
to work a day in your
life." - Anonymous*

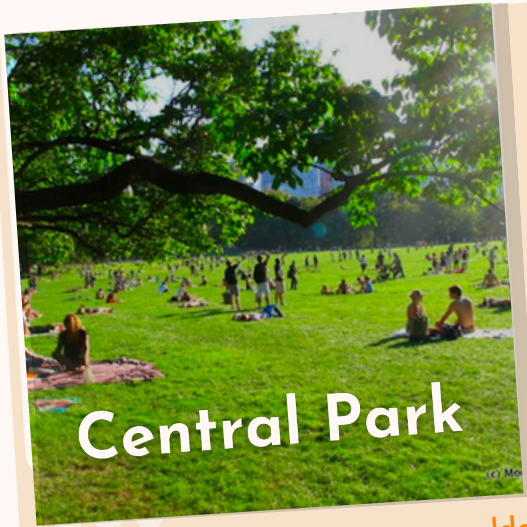
Get in the Know:



Spring in NYC



On Instagram, we asked you: What's your favorite way to enjoy springtime in NYC? Here's what you said!



duruntai likes to bike/walk. **joromauldes** likes to have a picnic. **anayarghuram** likes to read & eat croissants from Maman.



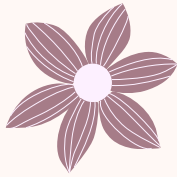
♥♥♥ thanks for the rec,
cgm2020!



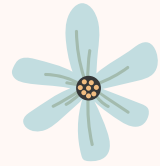
diegoneto writes: "Great park and the Unisphere sends the message that we can and should come together."



Get in the Know:



Spring in NYC



Our staff at OISS also have some ideas they'd like to share!

Denis likes to stroll through Battery Park, Brookfield Place, and Governor's Island when the weather's nice.

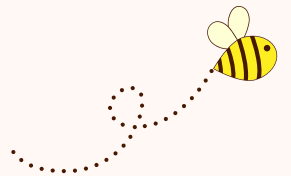
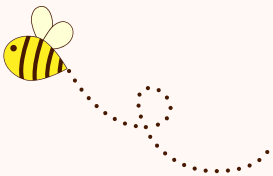
Patricia enjoys watching the different stages of flowers blooming, especially the cherry blossoms in Sakura Park and the daffodils in Morningside Park.

Hyunjin also loves the cherry blossoms, as well as outdoor dining!

Brian likes to get his spring cleaning done -- while NOT wearing a jacket!

Caylyn enjoys grabbing coffee with friends, and then walking & chatting in a park -- especially Riverside Park

Allison likes to ride the ferry and explore different neighborhoods.



Get Famous

What brought you to TC?

Before coming to TC, I worked in outdoor education in China. As awareness of mental health increases in Chinese society, many Western wellness modalities—positive psychology, wilderness therapy, social-emotional learning, etc.—have been introduced to the field. I was fortunate to work in several organizations at the forefront of experimentation and innovation, adapting these modalities to local settings, integrating them with the knowledge of the local culture, and supporting the inner lives of children and youth. While studying at TC, I aim to learn about the research that informed these modalities, observe their application in diverse cultural settings, and



Brook Li

*Masters of
Psychology in
Education with
Spirituality Mind
Body area of focus*

collaborate with other inspired educators to integrate wisdom from East and West as we care for the Earth and each other.

Get Famous: Brook Li

Is this your first time in NYC? What do you think of this city?

I was a little intimidated when I arrived at this vast, diverse, and bustling metropolis. But TC gave me a sense of stability and home, especially when I was adjusting to



life here initially. I felt supported by my program and various support systems within the college and gradually opened myself to the city's opportunities.

As an outdoor educator, I was especially surprised to find the rich resources available for environmental education. Nature-based training programs, volunteering opportunities, and community gatherings abound. For example, did you know there is a big birding community in Central Park? NYC is also filled with adventures. My bucket list before graduation is to learn to motorcycle or to perform stand-up comedy, at least once!

Get Famous: Brook Li

What do you think is special about being an international student? Challenging?

Adapting to a new language and culture can be challenging at times. There are times when I could not follow a class discussion or had to spend triple the amount of time on an essay or a presentation. But, as an educator, such experiences are very valuable to me



because they put me in a beginner's mindset. They helped me develop patience and self-compassion, not to take myself too seriously, and to ask for help when I need it. These are qualities that I hope to embody as I work with students and

support them on their own journey of learning and discovery.

Get Famous: Brook Li

What are you hoping to do with your degree after you graduate?

I plan to continue working in outdoor education. The pedagogy that has the greatest influence on me is Flow Learning, a playful and creative teaching approach that blends mindfulness and nature awareness. I hope to continue experimenting with it in the field and possibly integrating contemplative practices from Eastern wisdom traditions. I also hope to introduce Flow Learning to more educators by supporting it with research and scientific evidence that I learned in TC.

**Thank you for your
time, Brook!**



Get Informed

Scan the QR code or click here to submit your results to compete for a small prize! Winners will be announced in the next newsletter.

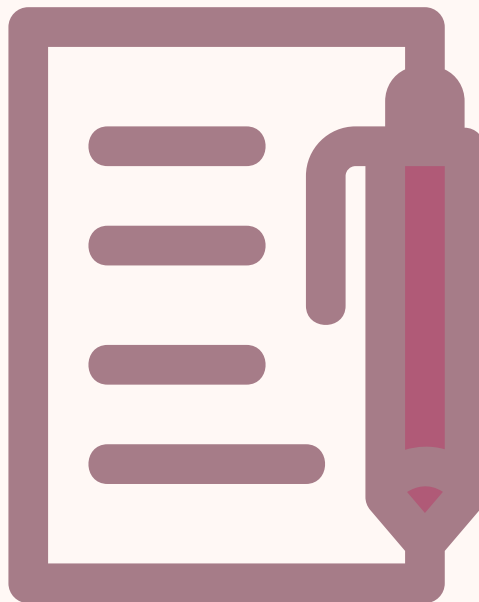
F-1 Quiz



J-1 Quiz



*Thank you for those who took the last quiz!
Please see the next page for answers.*



Get Informed

Check your answers from the last quiz:

1. Who needs to check in at the beginning of the semester?

Answer: Only new F-1/J-1 students need to check in at the beginning of the semester.

2. How should the check-in be done?

Answer: By filling out the check-in form on TC-Compass.

3. Do all F-1/J-1 students need to file taxes.

Answer: Depends; check OISS website for a general guideline of filing requirements.

4. When is the deadline to file taxes?

Answer: April 18.

5. What's the first step to obtain employment as an F-1/J-1 student?

Answer: Attending an OISS employment workshop is the first step.

Get Social

Time to get out and socialize. Here's what's happening in NYC/Columbia/TC in February and March! Click the event title and host site for more info.

[Visit to Long Island City](#)

April 20 @ 2-5pm | \$25
Hosted by [One to World](#)

Views of Manhattan from Gantry park; pizza that locals line up for; and a behind-the-scenes look at a commercial print shop. One to World is bringing NYC's international students for a trip to Long Island City, Queens!

[Unlock Your Career Potential: Essential Visa, Tax, and Job Finding Strategies](#)

April 21 @ 12:30 - 2:30 | \$15
Hosted by [One to World](#)

Finding your dream job after you graduate is no easy task – especially when questions surrounding visas and tax pose additional hurdles. One to World and Sprintax are hosting an informative career workshop so that you can learn from experts how to advance your career in the U.S. as an international person.

[Trivia at The Raven Pub](#)

April 25 @ 7:30 | \$10
Hosted by [One to World](#)

Compete against fellow international students and local players in fun trivia questions. It's a great way to make new friends and learn things about a range of different topics. Hosted by One to World.

[Job Search Strategy for International Students](#)

May 16 @ 2-3pm | Free
Hosted by [TC NEXT](#)

Are you hoping to work in the U.S. after you graduate? Learn about how to position yourself for a successful job search in this webinar on Interstride, an online platform for international students, made available to TC students via TC NEXT.

[Dance Parade New York](#)

May 20 @ 12-7pm | Free
Starts at 6th Ave & 17th Street, ends at Tompkins Square Park
Hosted by Dance Parade Inc.

Witness the stunning diversity of NYC in motion: more than 10,000 dancers performing over 100 different styles of dance from around the world. The parade is followed by even more performances and dance lessons at Tompkins Square park from 3-7pm.

[9th Avenue International Food Festival](#)

May 20 - 21 @ 10am-6pm | Free
48th - 54th Street, 9th Ave
Hosted by the Ninth Avenue Association

Travel the world by cuisine – all on 9th Avenue, in one weekend. Elevated finger foods, bubble tea, tapas, skewers, and plenty more!

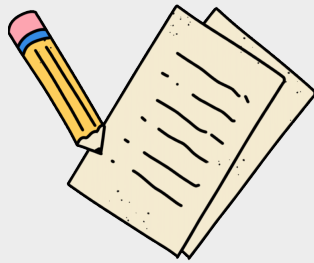
[International Day of Dance: 50 Years of Hip Hop](#)

April 28 @ 5:30-7PM
Everett Lounge
Hosted by TC Hub of Dancers, in collaboration with OISS.

In celebration of International Dance Day and 50 years of Hip-Hop, TC Hub of Dancers & OISS are bringing you an evening of cultural learning and electrifying dancing with renowned hiphop dancer Jorge "Popmaster" Fabel. Be sure to register and bring in your friends from all over Columbia, so we can dance our worries away!

Get Involved

If you have any thoughts or suggestions about what you'd like to see in this newsletter, we're all ears. Just send us an email at tcintl@tc.columbia.edu.



Nominate a classmate to Get Famous!

Know an international or internationally-minded classmate/student with an inspiring story, a great attitude, and a passion for learning and helping the world? Scan the QR code to nominate them:



Help us pick a name!

Do you have any ideas for what we should call this newsletter? Email them to tcintl@tc.columbia.edu. To show our appreciation, the winner will get a prize!

Penny for your thoughts?

What's on your mind? Share your thoughts on being a TC student by [taking our survey](#).