Welcome international students to the St. Joseph's College, New York Experience. I am sure that you have a lot of questions as you embark on this new journey in a new school but, most importantly, in a new country.

This handbook is an effort to impart some of the lessons learned and to help you make the most of your experiences here at SJC while you complete your degree. In essence, this handbook is a collective depiction of the ‘international experiences.

As you experience studying at SJC, and living in America, we encourage you not to be limited by the information contained in this Manual, but rather explore, experiment, find new procedures and most importantly share any information that might be helpful to your classmates, or to the next incoming international students with us. Your feedback will be valuable to incoming students in the forthcoming years. We appreciate any suggestions and additions to this handbook.

On behalf of the St. Joseph's College, NY family, we would like to welcome you again to SJC. If you have any issues, questions, concerns, need advice or would like to give some feedback, please feel free to contact us. We're here to help!

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BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

We are aware of how complicated it can be for students to prepare for a journey around the world to an entirely different atmosphere than what they have ever faced before. Here are some helpful tips.

F-1 Students

Who is considered an F-1 student?

This is a student who has applied and been granted F-1 status by the U.S Government, either when the entered the country through a legal port or by applying for a change of status.

Some Challenges International Students May Face

1. Cultural Adjustment
2. Language Barrier
3. Housing
4. Finances
5. Fraud

If you encounter any of these challenges please speak to someone as soon as possible.

WHAT IS A FORM I-20 AND WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?

A Form I-20 is a government form that tells the U.S. government that you are eligible for F-1 Student Status. It certifies that (1) you are or expect to be a "bonafide" student; (2) you meet our admissions requirements; (3) you will pursue a full course of study; (4) you proved to us that you have enough money to study and live in the United States without working illegally or suffering from poverty.

You need a Form I-20 to obtain an F-1 student visa or status, or to keep lawful F-1 status when transferring or changing schools within the U.S.
DOES EVERYBODY NEED A FORM I-20?

NO, some international students do not need a Form I-20.

J-1 students need a Form DS-2019 and should ask us for that application.

B visitors and F-2 dependents visa holders must obtain a Form I-20 and apply for a change of status to F-1 Student before pursuing a course of study that is not vocational or recreational in nature.

If you are maintaining another nonimmigrant status in the U.S., you do not have to have an I-20 and may attend school full or part time. Dependent children in E, H, I, J, L, M, N, O, P, R, or S status need to change status after their 21st birthday or if they marry.

If you have no legal status, you may attend school, but you are not eligible to change status and do not need an I-20.

RULES FOR OBTAINING YOUR FORM I-20

1. You must be a "BONA FIDE" student, accepted to a full-time program of study.

2. You must prove to us that you can support the costs of living and studying in the U.S. for every year of your program of study. This is required by U.S. law.
   - DO NOT EXPECT TO WORK IN THE U.S. TO HELP MEET YOUR ANNUAL COSTS! On-campus employment is limited and competitive; off-campus employment is strictly controlled by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
   - Carefully review our school’s estimated annual financial requirements for international students and figure out your annual costs. This is the amount that you must prove that you can provide for every year in your program of study. (Estimate a minimum of four years for a Bachelor's Degree; 2 years for a Master’s Degree).
   - These requirements are not negotiable. They represent a modest average budget that does not include luxuries of any kind. We strongly recommend that you budget at least 10% more if possible. Too little money causes pain and distress. We insist that students and their families look closely at the costs of living and studying in the U.S. and make careful plans to be sure your needs will be met.
   - Expect annual increases in tuition and living costs.

3. Read and follow these instructions very carefully. You cannot complete this process without following them step-by-step. Sometimes, we may have to ask you to give us more evidence of your financial ability—perhaps more than once. The U.S. government
requires that we be absolutely sure, to the best of our ability, that you will have enough financial support to cover the full costs of your stay in the U.S.

**Pre-Departure Checklist**

In order to assist with your transition into the United States and the SJC Community, the following checklist has been created to outline the items that we think are most necessary. It is important to store your original documents in a secure location and make copies for your record.

We cannot stress this enough! While traveling, make sure you don’t put documents in a checked bag. Keep them with you at all times.

**Important Documents to Bring:**

- Passport
- Identification Card
- Driver’s License
- I-20
- DS-2019
- I-94 (you will get this when you arrive in the US)
- Visa Documents (F-1 Visa, etc.)
- Copy of the transcripts if you are coming from another school
- Admission Letter
- Immunization / Health Records
- Health Insurance (if applicable)
- Cash (To get you through the first few days before you can set up a bank account in the US)
- Make an electronic copy and 2-3 hard copies of all important documents listed above.

**Attire Recommendations:**

New York climate is warm during summer months when temperatures can go up into the 90’s (°F) or higher and very cold during winter when temperatures drop to the 30’s (°F) or lower. Bring summer clothes as well as a winter coat.

**Miscellaneous Items:**

**Medication:**

- Medicine is expensive in the US. If you take any medicine regularly, make sure that you have at least two month’s supply.
- If you have any allergies make sure to list them on your medical form and arrive with any medication necessary.
• Don’t forget to carry the doctor’s prescription.

Health Insurance: All international students should have healthcare coverage that provides protection in the United States. If you do not have family/personal coverage, the following providers can assist you:

• PGH Global: www.pghstudent.com or 1.888.251.6253
• StudyUSA Healthcare: https://my.travelinsure.com/studyusa/?pcode=32701 or 1.800.937.1387

**Once You Arrive In The US.**

**Responsibility to maintain your lawful F-1 Status**

- It is extremely important to comply with immigration regulations in order to maintain lawful status.
- Immigration law has instituted severe penalties for "overstays" and "unlawful presence" in the United States.
- It is the student's own responsibility to maintain lawful status.

**How to maintain lawful F-1 status:**

1. F-1 students must maintain a full course load at all times for the duration of study
   • Undergraduate students 12 or more credits, unless otherwise authorized
   • Graduate students must carry 9 or more credits, unless otherwise authorized
   • Do not work unless otherwise authorized

**Transferring for another Institution**

**Congratulations on your acceptance to St. Joseph’s College!**

We are happy to welcome you to St. Joseph’s College (SJC), and that you want to continue your U.S. education with us. Please review the following information carefully to ensure that you maintain your F-1 student status.

The Department of Homeland Security requires that F-1 students complete a “school transfer” when beginning studies at a new school.

**WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO BEFORE YOU COME TO CAMPUS**
• Notify your international student advisor at your current school of your intent to transfer to St Joseph’s College, New York.
• Schedule a “release date” with your current international student advisor for your F-1 SEVIS record. Your SJC Form I-20 cannot be issued until after this release date has been reached.
  o **IMPORTANT: If you are completing, or have completed, your program of study or Optional Practical Training (OPT), you only have a 60 day period following the date of this completion to have your F-1 SEVIS record transferred to us. Your F-1 student status ends 60 days after you complete your program of study or OPT.**

• Complete the attached F-1 Transfer-In Information and submit it to the Office for Student Involvement and Leadership as soon as possible.
• Complete our Application for a Form I-20 and submit it, with all the required documentation to our office.

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**WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO AFTER YOU COME TO CAMPUS**

• Attend Orientation. It is required that you do so.
• See your academic advisor to select your classes.
• Report to the International Student Advisor (DSO) immediately after seeing your academic advisor. Make photocopies of the following documents, and bring them, along with the original documents with you to your meeting:
  § SJC Course registration form
  § Passport identification pages
  § F-1 and all other U.S. Visas
  § Form I-94 Departure Record
  § Our Form I-20 (if it was sent to you to travel)
  § I-20’s from all other schools you have attended in the U.S.

Ø Schedule your appointment with the International Advisor by contacting the number listed below.

*Important! You will not be allowed to register for classes until you have been cleared by International Advisor. We will not clear you without all of the documents listed above.*

• Return to International Advisor to pick up your new SJC Form I-20 once you have been notified it is ready.
Program Extension

Immigration regulations require that you file for an extension of time when you are not able to complete your program of study by the date that appears on your current Form I-20. To complete this requirement you must apply for a “Program Extension” and be issued a new Form I-20 before your current Form I-20 expires.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS REQUIREMENT RESULTS IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR F-1 STUDENT STATUS. ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE IS REQUIRED BY U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT TO REPORT THIS INFORMATION IN SEVIS.

How to qualify for a program extension

1. Your current Form I-20 has not expired.
2. You have sufficient financial support for the remainder of your program.
3. One of the following caused the delay in completing your program:
   • **An important academic reason** such as; needing more developmental English than you expected, a change of major, a change of research topic, or unexpected research problems.
   • **A documented medical reason.** Attach medical evidence from a licensed medical doctor or psychologist on official letterhead that states the nature of the illness and the period of time you were ill (if not already on file in our office).

A delay due to academic probation or suspension is **NOT** an acceptable reason for a program extension according to immigration regulations.

If you need to extend your program but do not meet these qualifications, please make an appointment to meet with the international student advisor to discuss your options.

How to apply for a program extension

Complete the attached Request for a Program Extension form. If the reason for your extension is academic, have the form certified by your academic advisor or department chairperson. If the reason is medical, attach documentation for the illness or medical condition.

If your evidence of financial support is more than one year old, complete the Application for the Form I-20 and attach the required documentary evidence of financial capability for the remainder of the time you will need to complete your program of study.

ALWAYS REMEMBER TO PROTECT YOUR LEGAL DOCUMENTS!
Make photocopies of them. Never destroy any I-20’s, keep all documents in a safe place.
Information about application processing

We will review your Request for Program Extension. If the reason for the delay in completing your program meets immigration requirements, your program will be extended and a new Form I-20 will be issued to you.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

What is CPT?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is employment that is an "integral" part of a student's established curriculum. The primary purpose of CPT is to achieve a specific academic objective in accordance with your academic program.

It may not be used for the purpose of gaining additional income. CPT cannot be authorized after course requirements are completed.

Authorization for CPT is given in the form of an I-20 endorsed by the Coordinator of International Students Services.

Eligibility for CPT:

- You must have attended the CPT workshop or make an appointment with the Coordinator of International Students Services.
- You must be enrolled as a full time F-1 student for least one academic year and maintaining valid F-1 status. (Graduate students do not have to wait one year)
- You must maintaining good academic standing, have no pending I, WU or FN grades from prior semesters, and a satisfactory GPA:
  - Undergraduate student GPA must be 2.0 or better
  - Graduate student GPA must be 3.0 or better
- Enrollment in an approved internship course- the course may be mandatory for all students in the degree program or may be optional, must apply toward completion of the degree requirements.
- Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.

Application Procedures for CPT:

1. Attend the mandatory CPT workshop
2. Complete the CPT application
3. Employment offer letter. An offer letter printed on official letterhead addressing the following points is required:

- Description of your specific duties
- Dates of employment (begin and end date)
- Number of hours of work per week
- Physical address of the employment
- Name of your supervisor

Allowed 5 to 10 business days for processing. If your CPT request is approved, a new I-20 will be issued and you will be contacted via email.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is OPT?

OPT allows students in their F-1 status to gain practical experience and training in a field directly related to their major area of study before or after completion of the program.

Students are allowed a maximum of 12 months of OPT, which may be completed all at once, or in several different intervals. (eg. three months each summer)

Employment authorization is given in the form of a small, plastic card called an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). This card will show your photo, signature, and the terms in which employment is authorized. It will also specify the time period during which you are eligible for employment.

OPT is limited to 12 months. It may be extended for certain STEM degree holders (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

Eligibility for OPT

- Enrolled as a full time student for at least one academic year and maintaining valid F-1 status.

- Maintain a satisfactory GPA:
  - Undergraduate student GPA must be 2.0 or better
  - Graduate student GPA must be 3.0 or better

Must have attended the OPT workshop and make an appointment with the coordinator of international students services.
When applying for post-completion OPT, application may be submitted 90 days before your program end date, but no later than 60 days after the last day of the term in which you completed all academic requirements.

**Application procedures for OPT:**

**Part 1- Apply for the new I-20 for OPT by submitting**

1. Complete I-20 application
2. Copy of current form I-94 (card both sides or electronic form)
3. Copy of Passport, including identity pages and expiration date
4. Copy of F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)

**Part 2- Submitting your I-765 Request for OPT to USCIS**

1. Schedule an appointment for OPT with Coordinator of International Student Services
2. Coordinator of International Students Services will review documentation required by USCIS:
   - Application Fee: a money order, certified check or personal check for amount of $380, payable to Department of Homeland Security
   - Cover Letter, addressed to the USCIS processing center, detailing all documents enclosed
   - Form I-765: Download and completed form I-765 from USCIS.gov
   - Form G-1145: download the option from USCIS.gov. This optional form tells USCIS that you’d like to be notified upon receipt of your application.
   - Form I-20: your international student advisor will issue your I-20 recommending OPT. Sign both and submit one with your I-765, keeping the other as proof of your valid F-1 Status.
   - Previously issued I-20s: provide photocopies of all I-20 ever issued to you.
   - Current form I-94: download your electronic I-94
   - Passport: Provide photocopies of the identity pages in passport, including expiration date and most recent U.S. VISA stamp.
   - Passport Styles Photos: Two identical passport styles photographs
   - EAD card: If you were previously authorized to engage in OPT, provide a photocopy of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued to you.

Mail the above documents to USCIS with 30 days of the issue date printed at the bottom of your new I-20.

**Important Notes:**
USCIS may take 90 days to process your I-765 request for OPT.
Traveling outside of the U.S. is not recommended while your request for OPT is pending with USCIS.
You may not begin working, volunteering or interning until you have your EAD card, and not until the start date printed on the Employment Authorization Document.
Students who begin working without proper authorization are in violation of their F-1 immigration status, and according to the U.S. regulations may not be eligible for reinstatement.

Travel

If you plan on traveling outside of the US, while here on F-1 status you must have a valid visa and your I-20 must be signed by the PDSO/DSO before you leave the US each time.

Resources:

BROOKLYN CAMPUS

Sherrie Van Arnam
Vice President for Student Life/PDSO
svanarnam@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5754

Kean Hawker
Asst. Dir. Of Student Involvement & Leadership
DSO/ International Student Advisor
Khawker@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5856

Jaime Vacca-Hoefner
Executive Director of Student Life/DSO
jvacca@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5856

Office of Career Services and Engagement
Director: Ellen Burti
eburti@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5852

Academic Center
Director: Matt Kubacki
mkubacki@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5314

Office of Counseling and Wellness
Director: Dr. Anissa Moody
amoody@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5734

Sam Lee
Part-Time Counselor
slee@sjcny.edu
(718)940-5357

LONG ISLAND CAMPUS

Adriana Silva
Associated Director of Admission
asilva@sjcny.edu
(631)687-4528

Jodi Duffy
Director of Graduate & Professional Studies
jduffy@sjcny.edu
(631)687-4525/ (631)687-454
Office of Career Services and Engagement
Director: Jennifer Rooney
jrooney@sjcnly.edu
(631) 687-1248

Office of Counseling and Wellness
Director of Counseling
Dr. Mary Schultz
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