

Volunteering and Unpaid Internships for F-1 and J-1 Students

It is a common misperception that if you are not receiving payment, you are just “volunteering” and not really employed. However, this is a complicated area involving both immigration regulations and employment law. It is your responsibility to be aware of the relevant regulations and laws that pertain to your activities in the United States.

F-1 and J-1 students that wish to engage in off-campus employment (whether paid or unpaid) must first obtain authorization. Engaging in employment without such authorization is a violation of your nonimmigrant status, see [8 C.F.R. 214.1\(e\)](#)

Under immigration and employment laws, “employment” generally refers to the relationship where an individual provides services or labor and receives wages or other remuneration for these services. Accepting housing, gifts, meals, or other non-monetary forms of remuneration for your services is generally still “employment.”

What is “volunteering”?

A “volunteer” is “individual who performs hours of service . . . for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.” ([29 C.F.R. 553.101](#))

employer through a cooperative agreement with The University of Akron. The purpose of CPT is to facilitate academic objectives, and it must be integral to the established curriculum of your major area of study. For more information about eligibility requirements and the application process, click [here](#) and select "Curricular Practical Training Application" under "Employment Authorization."

Enrolled F-1 students and F-1 students who have completed their academic program within the past 60 days may apply for **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**. For more information, see the form "OPT: Apply" on [thi.7\(g\)13.5\(ram\)-4\(ic\)3ET36\(h\).9\(pt\(o16.1\(er4\(re\)JJE&ET/Span ASD 2 BC B/CS0 cs 0 scn0 Tc 0 Tw 11.04 -0 0 11.14051](#)