



Severe Economic Hardship

Under **8 C.F.R. 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(C)**, if other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient, eligible F-1 student may request employment authorization based on severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. Such unforeseen circumstances may include the following:

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment through no fault of the student
- Substantial fluctuations in the exchange rate or value of the currency upon which the student depends
- Inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
- Excessive medical bills
- Other substantial and unexpected expenses

Please note that there is a \$410 application fee and the average processing time for severe economic hardship applications with USCIS is 2-3 months. For USCIS's policy related to expedite requests go [here](#). For information about U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' fee waiver criteria go [here](#).

To be eligible to apply for severe economic hardship a student must:

- Be enrolled at A&M-Commerce in their current academic program for at least one academic year (fall, spring)
- Be in valid F-1 visa status when filing for severe economic hardship and maintain a valid F-1 visa status during the duration of their employment authorization (if approved by USCIS)
- Be in good academic standing with the university and enrolled in a full course of study as required by SEVP
- Provide documentation to show that on-campus employment opportunities are unavailable or insufficient to meet your financial needs
- Provide extensive documentation to the OIP and USCIS on the circumstances which led to your economic situation and that they were unexpected and beyond your control

If USCIS approves your severe economic hardship application you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS granting you permission to work off-campus. Permission is granted incrementally for one year or for the remainder of your academic program if less than one year. Please note the following:

- You may off-campus for up to 20 hours only per week while school is in session and full-time during the vacation periods
- You may work in any job, related to your academic major or not

- You may not begin any off-campus employment until you have been approved by USCIS, reached your EAD employment start date, and have received your EAD card
- If you transfer to another school your EAD and employment authorization is terminated on your SEVIS transfer release date

To apply for severe economic hardship you will submit the following documents to the OIP in person or via email to Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu using the **Email Title: Severe Economic Hardship**. Please note that incomplete application packets will not be processed:

1. Letter stating in detail the nature of your severe economic hardship including:
 - a. Proposed employment start date (please note it takes USCIS an average of 2-3 months to process a severe economic hardship application)
 - b. The hardship situation
 - c. How this has affected your financial situation
 - d. Information related to your attempts to secure on-campus employment (application dates, interview dates)
2. Documentation supporting the economic hardship. For example, this may include the following:
 - a. Articles from reputable news sites detailing economic/political situation in home country or region;
 - b. A letter from home telling of a change in family circumstance;
 - c. Proof of currency devaluation in your country;
 - d. Letter from sponsor with supporting documents (financial statements, business information);
 - e. Death certificate or announcement for sponsor;
 - f. Statements related to changes in tuition/fees;
 - g. Employment termination letter;
 - h. Documentation detailing medical bills.
3. Copies of your current and previous I-20s, passport, F-1 visa page (except Canadians) or I-797 (approval of change of status to F-1), and I-94
4. Copy of any previous EAD card you have been issued (OPT, previous severe economic hardship)
5. If applicable, Copy of your unofficial transcript.

The OIP will review your documents and provide a response within 10-15 business days. If the OIP recommends you for severe economic hardship, an I-20 with your proposed employment start date and end date will be issued. Instructions will be provided with your I-20 including the form I-765 application and G-1145 notification form.

Resources

- [Form I-765](#), Application for Employment Authorization
- [Form G-1145](#), Notification Form
- **Severe Economic Hardship Code:** (c)(3)(iii) at item 27 of Form I-765.