Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars

Post-Completion

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Online Workshop
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide Range</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introduction: What is OPT?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Eligibility Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>When to Apply: Application Timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>OPT Start and End Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>How to Apply: Application Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-26</td>
<td>OPT Application Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>Next Steps: After OPT Application Submission to DCISS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>OPT Employment Restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-33</td>
<td>OPT Employment Types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>OPT Reporting Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-36</td>
<td>Cap Gap I-20: Transition to H1-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-38</td>
<td>Traveling Abroad During OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-45</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is OPT?

- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment authorization approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for eligible F-1 students interested in engaging in employment in the U.S. directly related to their field of study after their degree completion.

- F-1 students are eligible for an initial 12 months of OPT per higher degree level achieved.

- Applicants do not need an employment offer to apply for OPT.
Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, F-1 students:

- Must have maintained valid F-1 status for at least one academic year

- Must not have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level

- Must not have accrued 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)* for the same degree level

**NOTE:** Part-time CPT authorization does not affect OPT eligibility.
When To Apply

Application Timeline

- OPT applications may be submitted to USCIS for processing as early as (but no earlier than) 90 days before a student’s program completion date.

- USCIS requires approximately 90 days to approve an OPT application.

- It is highly recommended that students submit their OPT application to DCISS at least 3 months before a student’s requested OPT start date.

- USCIS may accept applications up to 60 days after a student’s program completion date. However, students applying for OPT after their program completion date may not receive the full 12 months of OPT authorization.
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

Program Completion date
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period
Application Timeline

- Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

- Program Completion date

- 90 days

- Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period

- 60 days

- 12 months

- OPT End Date
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period

60 days

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment

60 days

Program Completion date

12 months

OPT End Date

Students must depart the U.S., transfer to another school or change visa status by this date
- Applicants must choose their OPT start date at the time of application.

- A requested OPT start date can be as early as 1 day after the program completion date and up to 60 days after the program completion date.

**NOTE:** Graduate students may set their program completion date to their defense date, filing date or the official quarter end date. Graduate students who filed for filing fee status will have their program completion date shortened to the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPT Start Date Window</th>
<th>Degree Completion</th>
<th>Program End Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/10/2016 – 02/07/2017</td>
<td>Fall Quarter 2016</td>
<td>12/09/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/25/2017 – 05/13/2017</td>
<td>Winter Quarter 2017</td>
<td>03/24/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/17/2017 – 08/14/2017</td>
<td>Spring Quarter 2017</td>
<td>06/16/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/13/2017 – 07/11/2017</td>
<td>Law School Spring 2017</td>
<td>05/12/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/16/2017 – 11/14/2017</td>
<td>Summer Quarter 2017</td>
<td>09/15/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select any date within the window period as the OPT Start Date.
OPT Start and End Dates

OPT End Date will be one year more, one day less from selected OPT start date.

POST-COMPLETION OPT REQUEST DATES

Start Date: ____________________________ End Date: ____________________________

Please note: Requested OPT start and end dates cannot be changed once the OPT application has been submitted to the USCIS.

- Paper I-94: Please copy both front and back sides
- 2 Copies of your most recent U.S. entry stamp in passport
- 2 U.S. style passport photos. Please see U.S. Style Passport Photo Guidelines (please write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo)
- 1 Copy of all OPT I-20s (if applicable)
- 1 Copy of your passport photo page
- Verification of Degree Completion Form

FOR DCISS USE ONLY

INIT: ____________ DATE: ____________

☐ Restriction Holds  ☐ Current Enrollment  ☐ Past Enrollment  ☐ FSA / OASIS
How To Apply

Application Process

STEP 1: Complete DCISS OPT Online Workshop

STEP 2: Pay the DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee Online

STEP 3: Prepare and complete OPT Application Materials

STEP 4: Submit completed OPT Application to DCISS during a weekly OPT Hand-In Session:

Every Wednesday from 3PM – 4PM

Every Thursday from 3PM – 4PM

If you are unable to attend an OPT Hand-In Session, please contact DCISS at 310-825-1681 to schedule an appointment with an F-1 counselor to submit your OPT application.
OPT Application Materials

- $40 OPT Administrative Processing Fee – [Paid Online](#) (Payment Receipt Required)
- **OPT Request Form**
- **I-765 Form**
- $410 check or money order made payable to ‘U.S. Department of Homeland Security’ – Write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on front of the check
- 2 copies of your I-94 Admission Record
  - Electronic I-94: Print record from [CPB I-94 website](#)
  - OR Paper I-94: Copy both front and back sides
- 2 copies of your most recent U.S. entry stamp in passport
- **2 U.S. style passport photos** – Write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo
- 1 copy of all CPT I-20s (if applicable)
- 1 copy of passport photopage
- **Verification of Degree Completion Form**
The DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee is required to maintain systems required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to maintain a student’s F-1 SEVIS record during their OPT period.

SEVIS maintenance fees are covered for current, enrolled UCLA students by UCLA. Since students will not be enrolled at UCLA during their OPT period, they will be charged an OPT Administrative Processing Fee by DCISS, as SEVIS record maintenance is still required during a student’s OPT period to allow DCISS to process F-1 benefits such as travel authorization, I-20 requests, and OPT employment and address updates.

Students are required to pay the DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee each time they apply for Post-Completion OPT or OPT STEM Extension.
OPT Administrative Processing Fee

The DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee for the initial 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is $40.

To Pay the fee:

- Go to the [OPT Administrative Processing Fee Site](#) on the DCISS website
- Log in using your Bruin Logon – the payment site will then appear
- Click on the ‘Pay’ link for the Initial 12-Months OPT
Follow the instructions on the payment site to pay the OPT Administrative Processing Fee by debit or credit card.

To review your payment submission, click on ‘My Payments’ and a record of your payment submission will appear.
Receipt of your payment will be sent to your email address from UCLA Corporate Financial Services. Print a copy of your payment receipt for your OPT application submission.

From: noreply@finance.ucla.edu
Subject: Thank you for your payment
Date: 01 October 2016 11:15AM
To: georgemasunilo@ucla.edu

Receipt Number: 1234567
Customer: 44815DCISS
DCISS eMARKET
Current Date: 10/01/2016

UCLA eMARKET reference number: 5-PD010101-8D28DCF8922B5E7

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<td>Total:</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
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Thank you for your payment.
Please sign the I-765 Form in blue ink!
I am applying for:  
- [X] Permission to accept employment.  
- [ ] Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).  
- [ ] Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document).

Select "Permission to accept employment"
Please make sure the mailing address inputted here is valid for at least 4 months into the future from the OPT application submission date. This address must be an address in the U.S. and cannot be a P.O. Box address.

**Enter your I-94 Number here.**
Sample

Electronic I-94 Admission Record

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America’s Borders

Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 0001234567 11
Most Recent Date of Entry: 2016 Sept 01
Class of Admission: F1
Admit Until Date: D/S
Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname: MASUNIIYO
First (Given) Name: GEORGE
Birth Date: 1989 December 31
Passport Number: K0123456Z9
Country of Issuance: Bruinland

Retrieve a copy of the Electronic I-94 on the CBP Website:
i94.cbp.dhs.gov/
Sample

Most Recent U.S. Entry Stamp

Date of Last Entry to the U.S.:

Place of Last Entry:

01 SEPT 2016

Class: Jnr

F-1

D/S

United States of America

VISA

Issuing Post Name: ROYCE
Surname: MASUNIIYO
Given Name: GEORGE
Passport Number: K012345629

Entries: M
Issue Date: 01JUN2014
Expiration Date: 01AUG2019

Annex: N00000000X

University of California, Los Angeles

E2345123
11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?
   - [ ] Yes (Complete the following questions.)
     Which USCIS Office? ____________________________ Dates ____________________________
     Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
       ____________________________
   - [x] No (Proceed to Question 12.)

12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about (mm/dd/yyyy)
    09/01/2011

13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
    LAX

14. Status at Last Entry (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)
    F-1 STUDENT
15. **Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)**
   
   STUDENT

16. **Eligibility Category.** Go to the “Who May File Form I-765?” section of the Instructions. In the space below, place the letter and number of the eligibility category you selected from the instructions. For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.
   
   (c) (3) (B)

17. **(c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(3)(C) in Question 16 above, list your degree, your employer’s name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.

   
   Degree
   Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify
   Employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

18. **(c)(26) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in Question 16 above, please provide the receipt number of your H-1B principal spouse’s most recent Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-129.

   
   Certification
   I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the “Who May File Form I-765?” section of the instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Question 16.

   Applicant’s Signature
   Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)
   Telephone Number

---

**Code for Initial 12-Month Post-Completion OPT**

**Leave sections 17 and 18 Blank**
George Masuniiyo
417 Charles E Young Drive West
Los Angeles, CA 90095

Pay to the order of: **U.S Department of Homeland Security**

**Three Hundred Eighty and 00/100**

Name of Bank
Address of Bank

**DOB: 12/31/1989**
**SEVIS ID#: N0000000000**

Memo

Write your Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) and Your SEVIS ID # in the memo section.

**Note:** Do not write on the back of the check or money order.

$410.00

Date

George Masuniiyo
Photo Requirements

- Photo must be new and recent
- Photo cannot be same photo used for F-1 Visa or Passport
- Photo must be 2 inch by 2 inch
- White background only
- Neutral expression only
- Eyes and ears must be visible
- No glasses or eyewear

Recommended locations to have your photo taken:

Campus Photo Studio
Ackerman Union A-Level
310-206-8433

FedEx Office Ship & Ship Center
Westwood Location:
10924 Weyburn Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-443-5501

Wilshire South Location:
1520 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-475-0789

Write LAST NAME, First Name and SEVIS ID Number on back side of photos.
Verification of Degree Completion

UCLA Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars

VERIFICATION OF DEGREE COMPLETION

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is designed to provide F-1 students an opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study. Students may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before the completion date of their degree program. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) considers a student’s completion date as the date the degree requirements are completed, not the date that students participate in their commencement ceremony. Graduate students may use their defense date, thesis date, or the actual quarter and date as their completion date. Graduate students may not continue to work or receive funding/financial support from their department after their completion date.

Student’s Name: ________________________

Last Name

First Name

UCLA ID #: ______________

Date of Birth: ____________

Month Day Year

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

I verify that the student is expected to complete their degree requirements by:

Academic Department: ________________________

Academic Term: ______________

Month Day Year

Academic Program / Major: ________________________

Degree to be awarded at time of completion: [ ] Bachelor’s [ ] Master’s [ ] Doctorate

Student’s Cumulative GPA: ______________ Number of Units Currently Completed: ______________

Additional Comments:

Name of Student Affairs Officer (SAO) or Academic Counselor

Signature of SAO or Academic Counselor

School / Department

Phone / Extension

Date

Form must be signed by an Academic Counselor or Student Affairs Officer (SAO). Your Academic Counselor or SAO must confirm your program completion date.
After OPT Application Submission to DCISS

- **Return to DCISS to sign OPT I-20**
  - Applicants must return to DCISS one week after their OPT submission date to sign their OPT I-20.
  - *Note:* Failure to sign the OPT I-20 on time will result in cancellation of the OPT application.

- DCISS can *only* mail out your OPT application to USCIS for processing after you have signed your OPT I-20.

- Applicants will receive a Notice of Action receipt from USCIS approximately 3-4 weeks from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS.
After OPT Application Submission to DCISS

- Applicants can check the status of their OPT application online using the receipt number included in the Notice of Action. Case Status: egov.uscis.gov/

- Applicants will receive a Notice of Approval letter from USCIS within 2-3 months from the date their OPT application was received by USCIS.

- Applicants will receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card approximately 3 months from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS.

- Submit OPT Audit Report to DCISS once you receive your EAD Card or as soon as your OPT start date has been reached.
Students may not begin employment until they have received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and the start date as indicated on the EAD card has been reached.

Students may not continue working beyond the end date of the EAD card.

**Exception:** Students with a timely filed, pending 24-month OPT STEM Extension application or a valid Cap-Gap I-20 may continue employment beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card.
OPT Employment Restriction

- Students on OPT have a total of 90 calendar days (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment time during their 12-month OPT period that begins on the start date of their EAD card.

- OPT employment must be directly related to the student’s degree program.

- OPT employment must be appropriate for the student’s degree level.
Acceptable OPT Employment Types

- **Paid Employment:** A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week), or full-time.

- **Multiple Employers:** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program.

- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artist, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.

- **Work for Hire:** This is commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.
Acceptable OPT Employment Types

- **Self-Employed Business Owner:** A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program.

- **Employment Through an Agency or Consulting Firm:** A student on OPT must be able to provide evidence showing he or she worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

- **Unpaid Employment:** A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student’s employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
F-1 students are required to report the following information within 10 days of any change during their OPT period via the online OPT Audit Report on the DCISS website:

1. **OPT Employment Status**
   - Job Title and Description of Job Relation to Degree
   - Start and End Dates of Employment
   - Company Name, Address, Phone Number

2. **Change of Contact Information**
   - Change of address or U.S. telephone number

2. **Submit Copy of EAD Card to DCISS**
   - Submit a copy of the front and back sides of your EAD Card to DCISS by email: DCISSF1Unit@saonet.ucla.edu
Cap Gap I-20: Transition to H-1B

- Cap Gap – a period in which a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of their F-1 status and the start of their H-1B status.

- The most common situation occurs when a student’s OPT ends in the spring or summer and their F-1 status expires 60 days later, leaving a gap of several months before the start of the student’s H-1B status on October 1.

- The Cap Gap I-20 will automatically extend a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization without requiring a new EAD card.
The Cap Gap is available to F-1 students in all fields of study engaging in OPT with pending or approved cap-subject H-1B petitions.

Submit the following to DCISS to request for a Cap-Gap I-20:

1. Completed [I-20 Request Form](#)
2. Copy of H-1B Receipt Notice or Approval Notice from USCIS
3. Copy of front and back of EAD Card
4. Submit an [OPT Audit Report](#)
5. Current Shipping Address with Postal Code

   - Select Preferred Delivery Method:
     - Option 1: Regular USPS Mail (no tracking number or expedited delivery available, complimentary service)
     - Option 2: FedEx Express Mail (tracking number and expedited delivery available, must provide DCISS with a FedEx Account #)

Opening a FedEx Account #:
   - Via Online: [www.fedex.com](http://www.fedex.com)
   - Via In-Person: Go to a local FedEx Office location to open account #.
Travel Abroad During OPT

F-1 students who have applied for OPT are able to travel overseas for a short trip and return to the U.S. in F-1 status as long as the criteria below are met:

Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status **BEFORE** degree completion indicated on OPT I-20:

- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa
- Endorsed OPT I-20 (each travel authorization signature is valid for **6 months** from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.)

Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status **AFTER** degree completion date indicated on OPT I-20:

- Valid Passport, Valid F-1 Visa, Endorsed OPT I-20
- EAD Card
- **Proof of Employment or Offer Letter** (Verification document from an employer verifying your job title, job duties, duration and start date of employment written on company letterhead)
F-1 students engaging in OPT will still hold F-1 status in the U.S.

DCISS will still maintain and update an F-1 student’s SEVIS record while the student engages in OPT.

Services from DCISS such as support letters and travel request are still available to F-1 students engaging in OPT.

F-1 students engaging in OPT are still required to obtain a travel signature from DCISS on their I-20 to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status after traveling abroad.
Q1: How early can I apply for OPT?
   Answer: You may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before your degree completion date.

Q2: How long will it take USCIS to approve my OPT application?
   Answer: Currently, USCIS requires approximately 90 days to approve an OPT application. DCISS recommends that you apply as early as possible to avoid any delays.

Q3: How do I choose my OPT start date?
   Answer: Your OPT start date can be as early as the day after your degree completion date, or as late as 60 days after.

Q4: What if I submitted my OPT application and will not be completing my degree as expected?
   Answer: If you will not be completing your degree requirements by the program completion date that was provided on your Verification of Degree Completion form, you may complete your degree requirements during your OPT period while maintaining F-1 status. You will be subject to all OPT regulations during your approved OPT period.
Q5: What if I move before receiving the EAD card?

Answer: You may risk losing your EAD card in the mail if you file a change of address after submitting your OPT application to USCIS for processing. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service does not forward federal mail. We recommend that you provide an address for your OPT application that will be valid for at least 4 months from your application submission date.

Q6: Can I travel abroad while my OPT application is pending?

Answer: Depends.

Yes, if your re-entry date to the U.S. is before the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20 and you have all of the required re-entry documents.

No, if your re-entry date to the U.S. is after the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20.
Q7: What documents do I need if I want to travel overseas and re-enter the U.S. after my OPT I-20 End Date?

Answer: 1. Valid Passport
2. Valid F-1 Visa
3. OPT I-20 Endorsed for Travel by DCISS (each travel signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of re-entry to the U.S.)
5. Employment Verification or Offer Letter

Q8: My F-1 visa expired. Can I travel abroad during OPT?

Answer: Yes, you may travel abroad, but you must apply for a new F-1 visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas, as you will require a valid F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 OPT status. Note: it may be more difficult to obtain a new F-1 visa while on OPT, especially if you have not secured OPT employment. Please expect extended wait times for the F-1 visa application process.
Q9: Who determines if my OPT employment is related to my degree?
   Answer: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leaves this discretion to students to determine.

Q10: What if my employment is not related to my degree?
   Answer: Working in a field not related to your degree is considered unauthorized employment and is a serious violation of your F-1 status, which may result in being denied future immigration benefits in the U.S.

Q11: Can I begin employment before receiving my EAD card?
   Answer: No, you may not engage in any employment until you have received your EAD card and your OPT start date has been reached.
Q12: What do I do if I lost my EAD card?
   Answer: You must apply for a replacement EAD card from USCIS, which will require a new I-765 form, $410.00 filing fee, and supporting documents. Contact DCISS to schedule an appointment regarding an EAD Card replacement.

Q13: When does my 90-day unemployment period start?
   Answer: Your 90-day unemployment period begins on the first day of unemployment after your OPT start date (as stated on your EAD card).

Q14: What should I do if I am approaching my 90th day of unemployment?
   Answer: We recommend the following options: prepare to transfer to another school, depart the U.S., or change your visa status. For other options, please consult an immigration attorney.
Q15: Where do I report my OPT employment information?
   Answer: Please report your OPT employment status on the DCISS website via the online OPT Audit/Report.

Q16: Where do I report my change of address or phone number during OPT?
   Answer: Please report any changes in address or phone number within 10 days of the change on the DCISS website via the online OPT Audit/Report.

Q17: What happens after my OPT ends?
   Answer: After your OPT ends, you have an additional 60-day grace period to: transfer to another school, depart the U.S. or change your visa status. For other options, please consult an immigration attorney.
Important Reminder

Please return to the Dashew Center one week after your OPT application submission date to sign your OPT I-20.

Contact Us: 106 Bradley Int’l Hall
417 Charles E Young Drive West
Los Angeles, CA 90095
M – F | 8:30AM – 5PM, 310-825-1681
DCISSF1Unit@saonet.ucla.edu