

## *F1 International Student Newsletter*

### *Fall Semester 2009*

**Come for Coffee** The International Student Coffee Club is a time for us to meet casually and get to know each other. There is no specific topic or planned agenda. We just talk - about school, immigration, sports, the weather or whatever you like! You can drop in for a few minutes just to say hi or stay for the whole time.



Our next Coffee Club is scheduled for **Wed., Oct. 14 from 1:30 to 3:00 pm in the Transfer Center (RCF243)**. Bring your coffee (or tea or soda or water) and join us for a snack and to chat!!

### **What's Wrong With Withdrawing?**

**For F1 Students - LOTS!** Withdrawing from a class can result in a big problem for the F1 student.

Remember, F1 students are required to be enrolled in at least 12 credits for the fall semester. When a student withdraws, the total enrolled credits is reduced by the number of credits of the withdrawn class. If the result is less than 12 credits, then the student is not meeting the full time requirement.

For example, a student enrolled in 15 credits for the fall who withdraws from a 3 credit class is left with 12 credits. This student is still enrolled full time and the F1 status is not affected. But a student enrolled in 12 credits for the fall semester who then withdraws from a 3 credit course is left with only 9 credits of enrollment. That is less than full time enrollment and the student has a **BIG PROBLEM** with F1 visa status.

It is possible that an instructor may suggest that you withdraw from a class. Please remember that your instructors are not aware of your visa status and they do not understand the impact of withdrawing on your status.

**See your international student advisor if you think you want to withdraw from a class.** We are here to assist you in completing your courses successfully and we are dedicated to helping you avoid the consequences of falling below full time enrollment.

### **Time to Act**

There are times when an F1 student has to take action to remain in-status as an F1 international student. If any of these statements are true for you, then you need to take quick action:

1. **I'm completing my degree program and graduating this semester!** If this is true for you, then you have to tell us by **filing a Petition to Graduate by October 15**. The first step is to meet with your international student advisor to review your program. The second step is to take the paperwork to the cashier by the Oct. 15 deadline and pay the \$25 petition fee. If you have not done this yet, please see us as soon as possible!!
2. **I've petitioned to graduate and I want to file for OPT.** If this sounds like you, then you should attend an OPT info session (see the back for dates) and you should file the application by the end of October.
3. **I'm transferring to another institution for the spring OR I'm going home after this semester.** If this sounds like you, then please come in to see your advisor to let us know your plans. You'll need our help to successfully transfer your I-20 or to end your I-20 if you will not continue your studies.
4. **I think I need an extension.** If the program end date on your I-20 is Dec. 2009, but you are NOT graduating, you must meet with your international student advisor to discuss a possible extension. Extensions are not automatically granted. Students must apply for an extension and be able to show valid reasons why an extension should be approved.

If any of these situations sound like you,  
**PLEASE SEE YOUR ADVISOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!**

## Staying Well at HCC

Students, staff and faculty at HCC are educating themselves about H1N1 and the seasonal flu. Here are some tips specifically designed to help our international F1 students stay healthy!!

- ◆ F1 students at Howard Community College are required to have **health insurance coverage** and access to medical care in the U.S. can depend on it. If you have questions or need information on health insurance companies, please visit our office right away.
- ◆ H1N1 and seasonal flu information is available from our website and can be found at [www.howardcc.edu/about\\_hcc/news\\_and\\_events/h1n1flu/index.html](http://www.howardcc.edu/about_hcc/news_and_events/h1n1flu/index.html). Refer to this site often for current information.
- ◆ We encourage you to register for HCC Mobile Phone Alerts. The alert system allows you to receive instant notification of important campus information, including school closings and emergency information. Sign up at [http://www.howardcc.edu/about\\_hcc/news\\_and\\_events/alert/index.html](http://www.howardcc.edu/about_hcc/news_and_events/alert/index.html)
- ◆ If the college should close for an extended period, the international advisors will be available to you via email and voicemail. Send us an email at [intlstudent@howardcc.edu](mailto:intlstudent@howardcc.edu) or leave a voicemail at 410-772-4420. These boxes will be monitored and your messages will be returned within 48 hours.

## Work Options, Briefly:

1. F1 students can work **on-campus** with no extra or special permission from immigration authorities.
2. **Optional Practical Training**, OPT for short, is a benefit that students must apply for with USCIS. OPT is permission to work off campus either part time (up to 20 hours per week) or full time (up to 1 year of post-graduation employment). Employment must be related to the learning program.
3. **Curriculum Practical Training** is issued for a required training in the student's learning program.
4. **Economic Hardship** requires employment authorization and can be applied for in extreme cases of unforeseen circumstances resulting in loss of sponsorship. Prior to filing, students must be in F1 status for at least one academic year.

We'll be available to discuss work options after the next OPT information session on Tuesday, Oct. 13. Join us with your questions.

## Upcoming Events

- General registration for Winter/Spring 2010 begins Nov. 2. F1 students may register in person only, Oct. 26 - 30, after meeting with an international student advisor.
- OPT Information Session @ Transfer Center, Tuesday, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm to 1:00pm
- Transfer Workshop: Keys to Transfer @ Transfer Center, Wednesday, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, 12:30pm to 1:30pm
- Math, Science & Engineering Career Program @ Transfer Center, Tuesday, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1:00pm to 2:00pm
- Teacher Education Fair @ Burrill Galleria, Tuesday, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2:00pm to 4:00pm
- Transfer Workshop: Transfer Center Orientation @ Transfer Center, Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 12:30pm to 1:30pm
- Business Career Program @ Transfer Center, Tuesday, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1:00pm to 2:00pm
- OPT information Session @ Transfer Center, Wednesday, Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm to 1:00pm

For questions or for more information, contact us at [intlstudent@howardcc.edu](mailto:intlstudent@howardcc.edu) or call us on 410-772-4420.

