

## Trying to figure out whether you are a volunteer or whether the work is considered a job/internship?

Work that is unpaid may still be considered employment that requires F-1 or J-1 off-campus work authorization. Just because you are NOT getting paid, does not mean it is considered “volunteering” by USCIS. Many types of unpaid work are considered employment by USCIS. Any off campus employment for F-1 or J-1 students must be authorized. Without proper work authorization, off campus employment would be considered a violation of your F-1 or J-1 visa and your I-20 or DS-2019 would be terminated for “unauthorized employment”. You would have 48 hours to exit the U.S. with no option for reinstatement.

## **ARE YOU VOLUNTEERING?**

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*Volunteering refers to donating time with an organization whose primary purpose is civic, charitable or humanitarian in nature, without promise, expectation or receipt of any type of compensation for services rendered.* It is typically NOT RELATED to your program/major/field of study. So for example, if you would like to volunteer in a soup kitchen one a month to give back to the community that would be considered volunteer work. Volunteering should not exceed 20 hours a week during academic term time.

Are you actually a volunteer?

- You do not expect compensation or future employment
- You do not displace a genuine employee and the services you provide are not the same services that you were previously paid for
- You do not expect to be hired or paid in the future
- There are other volunteers doing the same work as you who are also not receiving any form of compensation
- Your employer/entity is NOT labeling you a “volunteer” just to avoid paying/compensating you
- You are NOT volunteering solely to acquire job/professional skills to add to your CV/Resume
- You are performing services for a non-profit organization for public service, religious or humanitarian objective

**If you disagree with any of the above bullet points, PLEASE ask your UMKC immigration advisor for guidance as your unpaid internship may actually be considered “employment” and therefore require CPT.**

## **IS YOUR UNPAID INTERNSHIP CONSIDERED EMPLOYMENT?**

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*Interns or internships, whether paid or unpaid, are usually (but not always) offered by the private sector and are related to the intern’s major field of study.*

Is your paid or unpaid internship actually considered “employment”?

- Do you expect, now or in the future, to be compensated by the entity?
- Are there other interns/employees doing the same work and being compensated?
- Are you interning to acquire job/professional skills to increase your chances of future employment?
- Is the internship directly related to your current program of study/major/field?

**If you answered yes to any of the above questions, PLEASE ask your UMKC immigration advisor for guidance as your unpaid internship may actually be considered “employment” and therefore require CPT.**