

Dear President Lee Bollinger and Director of ISSO David Austell,

We urge you to take action against the attack on the Optional Practical Training visa program (OPT) that is being explored by the Senate and the White House.

Half of the workers we represent are international students and scholars and this number is even higher in Schools like Engineering where the international student population is as high as 70%. All of those student workers rely on OPT and its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) extension to be able to work in the U.S. immediately after graduation. These workers are already facing heightened uncertainty as the world is battling COVID-19—whether it is because they left the U.S. to take care of their loved ones or because they cannot be with their families due to travel bans and delays in processing visas around the world.

As the consequences of the pandemic continue to reverberate, we cannot allow the U.S. government officials to use them as an excuse to implement discriminatory legislation that diminishes the capacity of our graduates to work in this country. To that end, we insist that Columbia joins Graduate Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2110 in pushing back against these attempts to stifle immigration of the talent from around the globe and in urging the U.S. government to preserve and enhance OPT and OPT STEM extension programs.

Graduate Workers of Columbia
GWC-UAW Local 2110