GUIDELINES ON START-UPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students who are pursuing start-ups must carefully consider the following guidelines to protect their current and future U.S. Immigration Status.

1.) Students working on a start-up idea/project may be permitted without the issuance of off-campus employment authorization, as long as the start-up idea/project is limited as follows:
   • Only academic activities for the start-up idea/project are pursued, such as:
     o Development of a business plan
     o Interviewing individuals in the field area you are researching
     o On-campus creation of a basic prototype
     o Research such as background/literature review on the field/business sector
   • The start-up idea/project is NOT already established and/or pursuing business activities (in the U.S. or abroad)
   • Only MIT student support funding/scholarship from MIT/MIT Sloan (such as the Sloan Opportunity Scholarship) is being received by the student for participation in the activity, in which case the project will be considered “on-campus employment.”

2.) Students working for an established startup, where there is an employer-employee relationship will require F-1 Curricular Practical Training or J-1 Pre-Completion Academic Training off-campus employment authorization (whether the startup is based/operating in the U.S. or abroad).

3.) F-1 Optional Practical Training allows for entrepreneurship, as the student can be considered self-employed. Activities beyond those listed in the bullets above are not permitted under F-1 Curricular Practical Training, but may be possible under Pre-Completion F-1 Optional Practical Training or J-1 Pre-Completion Academic Training.

Examples include (but are not limited to):
   • Registering the company/startup under local/state business entities or licensing
   • Outreach to venture capital or investors, fundraising or crowdsourcing
   • Manufacturing beyond a basic prototype
   • Cultivating suppliers or buyers
   • Signing contracts for services or sales
   • Pursuit by the student of the activities of the startup/company’s business.

Students who have any questions about their immigration eligibility and requirements should contact their MBA Program or ISO Advisor.