



Benefits of the Federal Work-Study Program (FWS)

By Maria Parrish

This two-part series will explain the benefits of the Federal Work-Study program as well as how to use the Career Center during your educational journey.

What is Work-Study?

Preparing for college can be exciting and planning how you will finance your education is an important first step. In your planning you have likely discovered that you may apply for scholarships, grants, or loans, however, what you may not know is that you may also qualify for the Federal Work-Study program. The best part of work-study is that you never have to repay any of your earnings.

This is How it Works:

The first step in understanding how you will pay for your education is to complete your application for financial aid. This will include applying for federal aid using the online FAFSA form to determine how much aid you may qualify for. Once you know your estimated expected contribution (EFC), you can go from there.

Understanding Work-Study

The Federal-Work Study program is available for students who have been determined to have a financial need that has been calculated during the completion of your FAFSA. The program allows students to work part-time, about 15 or 20 hours a week, and get paid for their work. They are paid bi-weekly, and deductions are taken just as they are with any other job. Your earnings are limited to approximately \$9,000 per year. Your wages will be paid directly to you and not your institution so you can allocate your funds as needed for expenses such as books, housing expenses, or food.

Types of Work-Study Jobs

The student employment center may be helpful in finding the jobs that are available or the steps you need to take to apply since they vary for each institution. Before applying, be sure that it is a job that you are somewhat qualified for since you will be required to apply and interview for the position. There are jobs such as tutors, which require you to work with your peers to help them with academic content that you have mastered. A teaching assistant works with the lead course instructor to grade assignments, lead webinars, or other teaching-related tasks. Once you have been accepted into the program you will be responsible for meeting all of the job requirements, including the stipulated hours per week that must be completed. You may also participate in a community service program and get paid.

You must find a local community program that you are passionate about and once you have secured the details of your schedule and the specific job description you can speak with the student employment center about getting started. Just remember that the organization you choose must be a non-profit and must provide services that are either educational or career counseling related. They must provide services for the community that directly improve the quality of life for low-income populations. For example, you may work with the local library and help with their literacy program in which you read to children from the surrounding community several times a week. Remember, the position must be approved by your institution prior to your start date.

Selecting the Right Job

It is important to understand that the role you select for your work-study position should be something that you know you will enjoy doing or something that will help you in your journey after graduation. For example, you may be considering changing careers, or seeking a promotion in your current career after graduation and need a little more experience in that field, and the experience you gain in the work-study program can be an asset to your resume since it will showcase your new skills. The contract for employment will require a one-year commitment so please only apply if you will have time to dedicate to the job.

Additional Requirements of the Work-Study Program

It is important to understand all of the minimum requirements of the program before you apply. The program is designed to only allow part-time work so that you have ample time for your studies, therefore, maintaining your GPA and demonstrating good academic standing with your institution will be a requirement to remain in the program once you are accepted. Also, you will need to be actively enrolled in courses.

The Best Part of Work-Study

Aside from the fact that you are earning money that will never need to be repaid, you are building relationships with peer learners in your institution by helping them in their journey. This is the best form of networking for the future. You may also want to get a letter of recommendation from your work-study supervisor that you can use when you seek that promotion after graduation. [Click here](#) to learn more about filling out the FAFSA.