

W A S H I N G T O N S T A T E



W O R K S T U D Y P R O G R A M

Student Handbook

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Washington State Work Study Student Handbook

This handy booklet is designed to help you get started in the State Work Study program. Please take some time to read the different questions and learn more about the opportunities that await students in State Work Study. It's a great way to earn money to help pay for your education, as well as a great way to learn real-life skills that will come in handy when you enter the world of work after graduation.

If you have any questions about the State Work Study program, contact your school's representative listed below.



What is the Washington State Work Study program?

It is a state program that is available to eligible college students to help them pay for college. By participating in the program, students also gain great job experience and have a chance to see if the program of study they've chosen matches their expectations.

Are there other kinds of work study? What are the differences?

The federal government also offers a program of work-study for eligible college students through the U.S. Department of Education. It's called the Federal Work Study Program.

The main difference between the federal and the state programs is that federal work study jobs often pay minimum wage. The state work study program requires companies to pay the same wage rate to both State Work Study students and those in the company doing similar work who are not students.

State work study jobs also must be in a field related to the student's field or career interest wherever possible. Federal work study does not promote this requirement.

In addition to offering federal and state work study programs, some schools also offer work opportunities, sponsored and paid for by the institutions. The rules for getting these types of jobs differ among schools. Contact your school for more information about other types of student employment, including institutional work study programs.



Why should I work? Wouldn't it be easier to take out a loan?

Loans can be lifesavers for paying for college, but they can also be what sinks your ship when you graduate.

Depending on how much you borrow, you could end up paying hundreds of dollars each month after you leave school, and you'll have to make those payments for 10 years. Nationally, the average graduate from a four-year university owes \$19,785. And that doesn't even count graduate school!

Because of high loan indebtedness, many students default on their student loans. If you default on a student loan, you could lose your federal income tax refund, you could be barred from gaining a professional license, and you could be forced to sit back and watch as your employer withholds some of your wages to repay the debt.

A state work study job allows you to "pay as you go" and reduces the amount you will owe in student loans when you leave school.



What are the benefits of the State Work Study program?

Deciding which area of study is right for you when you enter college is always difficult. Studying a discipline and knowing what the profession is about can be two very different things.

Work study programs allow you to try out career areas that interest you and gain practical experience in your major field of study. Studies show that students who have had the chance to work in their career fields are more certain about which professions are right for them.

Working in your field can help you decide whether you have chosen a career that matches your personality, talents and interests. Learning that you really do not like a particular kind of work and switching majors to a more suitable field of study early in your college career can save you money and valuable time in moving toward graduation.

Work can help you develop personally by giving you a chance to experience your own ethics for work, responsibility, fairness and consideration while learning which environments enhance your personal style. It can feel good to accomplish your work objectives and experience being a member of a team.

Finding the right job after graduation can be tricky. A state work study job gives both you and your employer a chance to evaluate whether you'd be a good employee. You may get hired permanently after graduation or be recommended to another company if you do a good job. This experience gives you a head start on other college graduates in seeking work.



Won't working interfere with school?

Believe it or not, studies show that students who work a reasonable number of hours a week — about 19 hours — actually do better in school than students who don't work. So, as long as you hold your work schedule to less than 20 hours a week, you can earn money to pay for school without sacrificing your studies.

Where can I work?

Under the State Work Study program, you can work for any for-profit or non-profit business or agency in Washington, or on-campus if you attend a public school, as long as the business and your job are not religiously affiliated and not political in nature. With prior approval from the Higher Education Coordinating Board, you can also work for an out-of-state or an international employer.

What if I already have a job?

If you already have a job in which you would like to continue, check with the student employment administrator at your school to see if it would qualify as a State Work Study job. If so, ask the human resources person in your company if the company would be interested in participating in the State Work Study program and hiring students. Because the State Work Study program reimburses employers for part of students' wages, most employers are eager to participate in the program. Ask your school student employment administrator for a State Work Study employer brochure explaining the program that you can take to your company.



How many hours can I work under the State Work Study program?

The total time you can work depends on the amount of your State Work Study award. Once your earnings — both the state's share and the employer's share — reach the amount of your State Work Study award, you must stop working, unless your employer is willing to pay the full cost of your hourly wage. If you have earned the amount of your award, you can check with your school's financial aid office to see if you might be eligible for any additional State Work Study funds. You may not work more than an average of 19 hours per week while you are attending school, or more than 40 hours per week during breaks and vacations.

What hourly wage can I earn in the State Work Study program?

State Work Study program rules require that the employer pay you an hourly wage that is comparable to what the employer would pay a non-student doing a similar job.

Am I eligible for benefits in a State Work Study job?

The employer must pay the employer share of any required benefits such as federal withholding tax, workers' compensation, federal Social Security taxes and state and federal unemployment taxes. The employer may also offer optional employer-sponsored benefits, although it is not required. Employers are not reimbursed for optional benefits.



How do I get State Work Study?

The first step is to apply for financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), answering the question that you are interested in work study. When you receive notice that your FAFSA has been processed, you need to contact the financial aid office at the school or schools you attend or are thinking about attending. They will tell you if they need anything else to complete the financial aid application. Be sure to carefully follow directions for applying for financial aid and meet all deadlines. Ask the school whether you are eligible to receive a State Work Study award and express your interest in taking part in the program.

After I get a State Work Study award, how do I find a job?

After the school has awarded you a State Work Study amount, you must begin the process of searching for a job that is in your career field or that fits within your career interests. Visit the student employment administrator at your school and ask to see the job listings that qualify for the State Work Study program. Look through the listings to see what interests you. Ask the student employment administrator whether you need a special referral or whether you can call the employer directly. Call the employer and set up an interview.



Why would an employer want to participate in the State Work Study program?

The State Work Study program offers many benefits to employers that choose to participate. It allows the employer to hire you as a part-time worker at a reasonable cost since the state reimburses the employer for a portion of your wages. Employers value the opportunity to bring bright, enthusiastic college students into their businesses. They know that you are learning up-to-date information that can benefit their businesses. Many employers use the program to “try out” and later hire promising students as permanent employees.

What does the employer have to do to participate in the State Work Study program?

An employer has to sign a contract and send it along with a short profile of the business to the school. An employer also has to submit a job description. After you are hired, the employer will be required to keep track of your hours and make sure you do not work more than the program allows. The employer must provide reasonable supervision and pay you an hourly wage. The hourly wage for the job must be equal to what the employer would pay to a non-student for similar work. Bonuses, commissions and wages on a salary basis cannot be reimbursed. After the employer has paid you, the employer must submit to the school a request to be reimbursed. The employer must renew the contract and job descriptions yearly.



Can you give me tips on interviewing for a State Work Study job?

Interviewing with an employer for a State Work Study job is no different than interviewing for a permanent position. The employer will be expecting you to be well groomed and dressed appropriately. In most cases, the interviewer also will expect you to have a resume that lists your prior work experience, if any, and your educational objectives.

At the interview, the person interviewing you will ask questions to determine your skill levels and career goals. He/she will also be looking to see if you are a suitable person for that work environment. Showing up on time, being attentive to the interviewer's questions and expressing genuine interest in the company's products or services will show the interviewer that you really want the job. After the interview, send the interviewer a note, thanking him/her for the time spent with you and reiterating your interest in the job.



Once I get a State Work Study job, what can I expect?

Your employer will expect the same performance and results from you as from any other employee. If you do not perform satisfactorily, your employer has the right to fire you. Both you and your employer must keep track of your work hours and ensure that you do not exceed the awarded amount and that you meet both the State Work Study program rules and your school's financial aid rules. You must also be paid at least monthly. You have the right to receive training, reasonable supervision and feedback on your performance.

Take your job seriously. Your employer depends on you. Be reliable and punctual and be sure you understand what is expected of you. When you must alter your agreed-upon work schedule, contact your employer in advance. Show regard for others by listening and communicating effectively. Respect your employer's business information and maintain trust and confidentiality by not discussing your employer's information outside the workplace. Do not conduct personal business while on the job, and dress appropriately for a business environment.

Attitude is an important component of your work experience. If you believe your job is important, then you will work hard to make your experience a success. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand your assigned tasks or any other aspect of your job. A good working relationship requires a partnership and mutual dignity and respect between you and your employer.



What are the rules of State Work Study?

- You have to apply and be eligible for financial aid.
- Your school must first award a State Work Study job to you.
- At public institutions within the state of Washington, you can work on or off campus.
- At independent schools, also called private schools, you usually can only work off campus
- Hourly rates of pay must be comparable to the entry rate at the same or comparable job.
- Whenever possible, the position should be related to your educational plan or career aspiration.
- Your employment may not result in displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for service.
- Work cannot be related to any religious or political activity.
- Depending on the size of your authorization or award, you may work up to 19 hours a week while in class, and 40 hours a week during academic year breaks and vacations. Whether you can work summers when you are not enrolled for summer depends on your school's policy.

Tracking Your Earnings

The example below illustrates how to monitor your earnings against your SWS award. Although your employer is reimbursed for a portion of your wage, your full wage must be deducted from your award each time you are paid. If you exhaust your award, check with the financial aid office to see if you are eligible for additional funds.

EXAMPLE: You receive a \$3,000 award for fall quarter beginning Sept. 1 and ending Jan. 14. Your pay is \$9.00 an hour.

Name: _____

SWS Award Amount: \$3,000 / Hourly Wage: \$9.00 = Total Hours in Award Period: 333

Award Beginning Date: 9/1 Award Ending Date: 1/14 = Total Weeks in Award Period: 18

Total Hours in Award Period: 333 / Number of Weeks in Award Period: 18 = Average Weekly Hours to Be Worked: 18.5

Pay Period Date: From	To	Hourly Rate	Hours Worked	Gross Earnings	Cumulative		Remaining Award Amount
					Hours Worked	Hours Remaining	
		\$9.00	0	\$000.00	0	333	\$3,000.00
9/14	9/29	9.00	18.5	166.50	18.50	314.50	2,833.50
10/01	10/30	9.00	45	405.00	63.50	269.50	2,428.50
11/01	11/28	9.00	72	648.00	135.50	197.50	1,780.50

Name of SWS School Administrator: _____ Phone: _____

Name of My Employer: _____

Address: _____

Name of My Supervisor: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____

SWS Award Amount: _____ / Hourly Wage: _____ = Total Hours in Award Period: _____

Award Beginning Date: _____ Award Ending Date: _____ = Total Weeks in Award Period: _____

Total Hours in Award Period: _____ / Number of Weeks in Award Period: _____ = Average Weekly Hours to Be Worked: _____

Pay Period Date:		Hourly Rate	Hours Worked	Gross Earnings	Cumulative Hours Worked	Hours Remaining	Remaining Award Amount
From	To						

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PO Box 43430 ■ Olympia, WA 98504-3430 ■ (360) 753-7800 ■ www.hecb.wa.gov