

Federal Work Study Program

Have you ever wondered how your friend got that part time job working as a clerk in the admissions office or how your classmate scored a cool job stocking textbooks at the school bookstore? Well they may have received those jobs as part of a Federal Work Study Program. Millions of students across the country receive work-study assignments as part of their financial aid package for college.

What is work-study?

Federal Work Study is a program where a student can work part time to earn money, which will be applied towards the tuition balance at their school. These assignments are usually awarded to students who exhibit financial need. Need is determined by the school by using a formula created by the government.

How does it work?

Since the government funds Federal Work-Study, the minimum hourly wage is equal or greater than the federal minimum wage. Students usually work a minimum of about 10-15 hours per week with the maximum being 20 hours. Jobs can be located on or even off campus at federally approved companies, however the job at off-campus facilities must be in the best interest of the public, such as non profit organizations or community facilities.

How to apply for work-study

In order to apply for work-study a student must fill out the FAFSA, Free Application For Federal Student Aid. When filling out the FAFSA, there will be a section which will ask which types of financial aid you are interested in, such as loans, grants, and work-study. Be sure to check this box, as this will alert your school(s) that you are interested in this program as part of your financial aid.

What are the benefits of Federal work-study?

There are quite a few advantages with the work-study program. First, since this is a federal program, then you can be guaranteed that your part-time hours are flexible enough to revolve around your school schedule. Also, when you fill out your FAFSA the following year, the money you earned through work-study is not counted as income to determine your need for financial aid. Finally, the best part is that you get to work and the money is automatically applied to your outstanding tuition balance. If you combine work-study with loans, grants, and scholarships, then it makes paying for college a lot easier and less stressful.

Other points to remember:

Every college and university that participates in the work-study program has their own preset rules and terms regarding the process. If you are awarded work-study as part of your financial aid package, then make sure you ask some questions so that you get the most out of your experience. You should be sure to ask questions such as: "Do I have to find a job or will one be assigned to me?" or "What will my hours be?" You also want to be sure that when you are finally assigned your job that you show up as scheduled. Showing up late or not at all could get you fired thus, losing your work-study award.