

# **Federal Work-Study**

## **What is Work-Study?**

Federal Work-Study is part of the financial aid package providing jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay educational expenses. The Federal Work-Study Program reimburses employers for 75% of the students' earnings up to the amount of the award (initial or adjusted). Any wages earned after that amount must be paid 100% by the employer. It is the responsibility of the student and the supervisor to monitor earnings to be sure the award amounts are not exceeded. Students should never work more than 8 hours in one day or 20 hours in one week, other than periods of non-attendance (i.e. times when classes are not in session).

In order to be employed in a Work-Study job, you must have a Work-Study award.

## **Why participate in Work-Study?**

Although Work-Study should be treated as any other job, it does have some distinct advantages.

- Students and Work-Study employers arrange a work schedule around the class schedule.
- Work-Study wages are not counted towards next year's contribution for financial aid.
- Although the majority of Work-Study positions are located on-campus, the program also offers a growing number of off-campus, community service positions. Regardless of the location, the ultimate advantage of a Work-Study position is that it affords students invaluable experience when preparing to enter the job market after graduation, not to mention the departmental and/or professional contacts that can be made, the references that may be available, and of course the educational funding that can be earned.
- Studies have also consistently shown that students participating in Work-Study improve their time management skills, are more actively involved in campus activities, and generally perform better in their studies.

## **How do I receive a Work-Study award?**

You must complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to be awarded Work-Study. For initial consideration, the question regarding Work-Study interest must be marked "yes". Students responding negatively or not at all will need to contact the Financial Aid Office to be considered.

Your resulting award notification will indicate the amount of your Work-Study award and you will then have the option to accept or reject the award. Please note that not having Work-Study awarded may be as a result of several different things.

- You may not meet the eligibility requirements of sufficient need. (Remember, any grants or scholarships you are receiving are awarded before Work-Study.)
- Work-Study funds may have been exhausted. A limited amount of funds are allocated each year to each institution and many students indicate an interest in Work-Study. This does not mean that funds may not become available later as students either elect to not attend WTAMU or choose to reject their Work-Study

award. To assist you in this situation, you will be placed on a waiting list and your award notification will be revised should funds become available.

### **How do I earn my Work-Study award?**

Your Work-Study award will represent the amount of money you can earn through a Work-Study job. In order to earn this award you must be employed and working in a Work-Study position.

Each Work-Study position has a wage attached to it. Work-Study positions pay hourly.

Work-Study positions will pay no lower than minimum wage but may be higher depending on employer, type of work, skills required, and longevity.

You will be paid through the University payroll system according to the pay rate and number of hours you work and are paid bi-weekly.

### **How many hours can I work per week?**

Twenty (20) hours per week are the maximum recommended for academic reasons as well as tax reasons. If you work 20 or more hours per week (among all your campus jobs) FICA (Social Security) will be deducted from your wages. Most work-study awards allow for between 10-20 hours per week.

### **How much can I earn in Work-Study?**

Students may earn up to the amount of their award listed on their award package in Buff Advisor. Students may not earn more than the total amount of their award. However, the student and/or the supervisor may contact the Financial Aid Office to determine if any additional eligibility remains for the award period. Wages paid may not be less than the federal minimum wage and may be set at a higher rate by the employer according to various criteria such as skills needed, longevity, and departmental funds availability.

### **Isn't work-study money non-taxable?**

Work-study earnings are taxable income. If taxes were withheld from your paycheck you probably are eligible for a tax refund depending of course on your total annual earnings. It is in your best interest that you file a tax return with the Internal Revenue Service by April 15.

### **Am I eligible for benefits?**

No. Work-study (FWS) students are not eligible for paid vacation, sick leave, holidays, or medical and dental insurance through their Work-Study job.

### **Can my fall/spring work-study award be used in the summer?**

No, you must apply separately for summer work-study. You cannot carry over any unused earnings to the summer. A summer application is available on line at the WTAMU Financial Aid website and in the Financial Aid Office. Summer work-study eligibility is contingent on funding availability and need. If you are enrolled for at least three credit hours during the summer and complete the summer financial aid application you may be eligible for summer work-study.



## **Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Student Employee**

By accepting a Work-Study (FWS) position, students become members of a department or agency that depends on them. Students should report to work on time, notify the supervisor when they will be late or absent, and dress appropriately for the work location (dress code should be discussed during the interview). When asking for time off, students should consider the employer's needs as well as their own. In addition, some FWS positions may require access to confidential information. Students will be asked to sign a confidentiality statement, a copy of which is maintained in the department and the original is filed in the Office of the Registrar. Abuse or misuse of such authorization is grounds for dismissal and other disciplinary action!

If a problem develops on the job, the first point of contact should be the supervisor. If the problem cannot be resolved the student should contact the Federal Work Study Specialist in the Financial Aid Office for resolution or possible further referral. Quitting a Work-Study job should be the last resort. There is no guarantee that the Work-Study award can be replaced with another type of aid or that you can secure another Work-Study position. Failure to follow expected policies and regulations may result in the cancellation of the Work-Study award and the loss of the Work-Study position. Acceptance of a position through Work-Study implies a commitment to the employer for at least one semester unless a prior arrangement is agreed upon.

### **Supervisors**

For a Work-Study program to succeed, supervisors must make certain commitments to student employees. The supervisor must work with the work-study employee to make sure that the job never conflicts with the student's education. The student's first responsibility is to obtain an education. Supervisors are expected to adequately train students in their responsibilities and to provide helpful guidance as needed. While students may temporarily or occasionally perform

duties that are normally those of a regular employee, it is against federal law to replace a regular employee with a work-study employee.

The supervisor also agrees to monitor the work-study students time sheet and to sign it at the appropriate time after the student has signed the document. The University Payroll Office provides a schedule of when time sheets are due. The interview and other preliminary discussions should cover such areas as the pay-rate, the acceptable dress code, and scheduling. The supervisor should of course, make certain that adequate work is available for the position and know that just as with any other employment, the wages must be earned. Supervisors also accept and acknowledge that any monies earned above the student' original or adjusted Work-Study award is the 100% responsibility of the employing department or agency.



### **What are America Reads and America Counts?**

In a combined effort to help America's school children and their families improve their literacy and math skills and to afford college students the chance to give back to their communities while exploring further career opportunities in education, the U.S. Department of Education first established the America Reads program which was followed a few years later by the America Counts initiative. Through these programs, eligible work-study participants tutor children in after-school programs. Students interested in earning Work-Study funds through one of these programs should first contact the Division of Education regarding qualifications and availability.

### **How do I participate in the Community Service component of Federal Work-Study (FWS)?**

Some Work-Study positions on campus qualify as Community Service jobs. However, the majority of these opportunities are found in nonprofit organizations and governmental entities, as well as public elementary and secondary schools. The WTAMU Career and Counseling Services Office, Student Employment Services, and the Financial Aid Office are seeking to expand the number of participating organizations. If you are interested working for or know of an organization that might be a participant, contact one of these offices for further details. A WTAMU representative will contact the organization to discuss the possibility of such a partnership.