

# Federal Work Study

## FINANCIAL AID WARRIORS

TRANSFORMING STUDENT LIVES ONE AT A TIME

SPRING 2026



WORK, WORK, WORK,!

# Federal Work-Study Basics & Best Practices

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# Determine Student Eligibility

Before a student can be awarded FWS, you must confirm:

- They filed a FAFSA and have **financial need**.
- They are **eligible for federal aid** (citizenship, SAP, no loan defaults, etc.).
- They are enrolled at least half-time (most schools require this, though not federally mandated).

FWS is *need-based*, so it must fit within the student's **cost of attendance (COA)** and **unmet need**.

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# AWARDING FWS FUNDS

Schools receive a set amount of FWS funding each year. When awarding:

- Stay within your **campus FWS allocation**.
- Award based on **need, available jobs, and budget strategy**.
- Track awards carefully so you don't over-commit funds.

Many schools award conservatively early in the year and adjust later.

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# JOB PLACEMENT & HIRING

Students must be placed in eligible FWS positions:

- Jobs can be **on-campus** or **off-campus** (nonprofits, public agencies).
- Work must be **in the public interest**.
- Students cannot replace full-time staff or perform religious instruction.

Students must complete hiring paperwork (I-9, W-4, etc.) before working.

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# Tracking Hours & Earnings

This is one of the most important compliance areas:

- Students **cannot earn more than their FWS award**.
- They must be paid **hourly**, not salaried.
- Timesheets must reflect **actual hours worked**, signed by student and supervisor.
- Students cannot work during scheduled class times.

Most schools use payroll software to track earnings in real time.



# PAYING STUDENTS

Federal rules require:

- Students are paid **at least minimum wage**.
- They are paid **for hours worked**, not for unworked time (like holidays).
- Paychecks must be issued **at least once a month**.

The federal government reimburses a portion of wages (usually 75%).

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# MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE & RECORDS

You must keep documentation for:

- Eligibility
- Award amounts
- Job descriptions
- Timesheets
- Payroll records
- Community service placements (schools must meet minimum requirements)

Compliance is key—FWS is one of the most frequently audited aid programs.

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# COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENT

Schools must ensure:

- At least **7% of their FWS allocation** is spent on community service jobs.
- They have at least **one reading or math tutoring program**, or family literacy program.

This is often the trickiest requirement for small schools.

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# COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS & SUPERVISORS

Clear communication prevents most issues:

- Students need to understand their award limits.
  - Supervisors must monitor hours and follow federal rules.
  - Everyone should know the process for timesheets, payroll deadlines, and job expectations.
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# PRACTICAL CAMPUS OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

## Hiring Deadlines

- Departments must submit student hiring requests by the established FWSP deadline each term.
- Students may not begin working until eligibility is confirmed and hiring documentation is completed.

## FWSP Contracts

- Identify the office responsible for managing FWSP contracts (**Human Resources or Financial Aid**).
- Ensure all employment documentation and agreements are completed before the student's start date.
- Contract displays the total FWSP Offer and maximum hours per term



# PRACTICAL CAMPUS OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

## **Rate of Pay**

- Determine institutional wage structure:
- Standard hourly rate for all students **or**
- Variable pay rates based on job responsibilities, experience, or specialized skills.

## **Student Selection Process**

- Clarify whether students:
- Self-select and apply for available positions, or
- Are assigned to departments based on institutional need and eligibility.



# PRACTICAL CAMPUS OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

## Off-Campus Community Partnerships

- Establish agreements with eligible community organizations.
- Ensure placements meet federal **community service** requirements and institutional oversight standards.
- Coordinate monthly payments for entities 25%

## Reassignments & Cancellations

- Develop procedures for reassignment to another department if needed.
- Establish guidelines for canceling positions due to funding limits, performance concerns, or loss of eligibility.



# PRACTICAL CAMPUS OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

## **Technology & Software Management**

- Utilize institutional systems (e.g., Banner, Colleague, PeopleSoft, Workday, Handshake, or campus employment portals) to manage:
  - Student eligibility
  - Job postings
  - Hiring documentation
  - Award tracking and earnings monitoring
  - Timekeeping & Payroll Oversight
- Students must submit timesheets through the electronic timekeeping system.
- Supervisors approve hours worked, and a
- Proxy approver should be designated to approve timesheets in the supervisor's absence to prevent payroll delays.



# FWSP GOAL

**Ensure compliance with federal regulations, efficient program management, and meaningful employment opportunities for students while supporting institutional operations.**

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# QUESTIONS

- WHAT ELSE CAN WE CLARIFY ABOUT FEDERAL WORK-STUDY?
  - ARE THERE SPECIFIC SCENARIOS YOU'D LIKE TO DISCUSS?
  - ANY PROCESS CHALLENGES YOUR OFFICE IS FACING?
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