What is the Work Study Program?

The Federal Work Study Program is a need-based Federal Aid program that allows eligible students to work on campus. Students earn their Work Study award by earning wages (generally minimum wage) through on-campus employment.

How does the Office of Student Financial Assistance determine my eligibility?

In order for the Office of Student Financial Assistance to determine if a student is eligible for the Work Study Program, he or she must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year.

What is the difference between Regular student employment and Work Study employment?

Only students who demonstrate enough financial need (unmet need) can participate in the Work Study program. Students who do not qualify for Work Study can work on campus through Regular student employment. Work Study students and Regular student workers work the same number of hours, earn the same wage, and get the same kinds of jobs. The difference between the two programs is the fund from which a student is paid. Regular student workers are paid directly from a department’s regular budget. For Work Study students, 25% of the wage is paid through the department’s budget and the Federal government supplements the remaining 75%. Essentially, it costs a department less to hire a Work Study student.

How does Work Study benefit me?

Each year, the FAFSA form requires that a student report his or her income from the previous year. When a student earns money through Work Study employment, he or she reports adjusted gross income as it appears on the Federal tax return. However, there is a section on the FAFSA that requires a student to report “taxable earnings from Federal Work Study.” When a student enters their work study earnings amount in this section, the U S Department of Education essentially credits this amount against the student’s total reported income. When the government calculates a student’s eligibility for aid, the amount earned from Work Study is counted as Financial Aid rather than income. Reporting Work Study earnings on the FAFSA can increase a student’s eligibility for aid.

What is a Work Study award?

Based on a student’s unmet need, the Office of Student Financial Assistance may award an eligible student a set amount to earn per semester once they have secured a position through the interview and hire process. Once the student earns the amount awarded, he or she has exhausted his or her Work Study eligibility and must be switched either to Regular payroll or terminated from the position as decided by the department head or supervisor. If a student does not earn the full amount awarded, the remainder will go unused.

Am I Supposed to monitor my earnings?

The student as well as the department must be aware of the student’s Work Study award and monitor the rate of earning. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will automatically terminate a student from Work Study once he or she exhausts his or her award. The Financial Aid office will notify the supervisor of termination through e-mail and campus mail and it then becomes the responsibility of the department to switch the student to regular payroll if the student is to remain an employee.
How do I receive my Work Study award? Do I automatically have a job when I start school?

The award is only disbursed when a student secures a position through the interview-and-hire process. Students should not rely on the Office of Student Financial Assistance to get a job for them. Students may actively pursue a job on their own initiative.

Students can take advantage of the Career Services Center located in the Orr Center. Career Services usually has a listing of available jobs on campus. Just remember that Career Services does not administer the Work Study program, so they cannot determine your eligibility.

Does Work Study help pay tuition and other fees?

Students earn their Work Study award in the form of a bi-weekly paycheck. Students may use the money from their paycheck to pay their bill with the University, but the money is not automatically deducted.

Since it’s called Work Study, do I get to study on the job?

Generally, departments and supervisors will be flexible to schedule a student for work around his or her class and study time. The program is limited to 20 hours per week so as not to detract from a student’s studies. Some jobs on campus may allow students to study while working, but departments are not required to allow students to study on the job.

Are there any limits to the Work Study Program?

The government allows USI to make an allotted amount of Work Study awards each year. Once this dollar amount has been spent in the form of Work Study awards, no additional award can be issued regardless of a student’s eligibility. As a result, Work Study is awarded on a first come, first served basis.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance helps to place students with departments that are hiring. The Work Study program can be limited based on job availability. Departments interview and hire Work Study students based on qualifications and experience. Departments are not required to hire a student based on their Work Study eligibility. Because returning students often resume the position they had the previous year, Work Study awards may be more limited for new freshmen or returning/transfer students who were not employed in the FWS Program in the previous year.

Because the Work Study program is a Federal Aid program, students must comply with USI’s Satisfactory Academic Progress policy to remain eligible. Copies of this policy are available in the Office of Student Financial Assistance and on our web page, www.usi.edu/finaid.

Work Study students are limited to working 20 hours per week when classes are in session.

Is there anything else I should know about the Work Study program?

Students must complete a Work Study resume (a form provided by the Office of Student Financial Assistance) and turn it in to the Office of Student Financial Assistance by the deadline each year for priority consideration.

Students who are interested in the Work Study program should indicate their interest on the FAFSA form each year.

All student workers are requested by Human Resources to have their paychecks direct deposited into the bank of their choice.

FOR ACCURATE AND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION PLEASE CHECK YOUR MYUSI REGULARLY!