

# **FEDERAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM STUDENT GUIDE**



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

Federal Work-Study is a federally funded program that enables students to earn money for college costs through part-time employment. The program pays a portion of the students' wages which allows the campus to provide more work opportunities on and off-campus to students. The program also allows students to secure academic or career-oriented employment while providing essential services to the University and the community.

The FWS program was also created to stimulate and promote part-time employment for students who have financial need and who need earnings to pursue a college education. It allows students to meet their educational expenses without incurring a lot of debt and is intended to provide worthwhile job opportunities for qualified students.

Your work-study award contributes more than financial assistance to your college education. It offers you a double bonus--education plus job experience. In increasingly competitive job markets, employers seek applicants who have employment as well as academic experience. Your award may also provide:

- Practical training and experience in your chosen field.
- Positive job experience to help you identify career objectives.
- An impressive resume and recommendations from former employers.

In addition, a student's income earned under a work-study job is exempted from student contribution assessment. This means that earnings from your work-study job will not be included in calculating your student contribution which may improve the amount and types of aid you are considered for when filing a financial aid application in future periods.

### **How can I be eligible for FWS?**

To be considered for Work-Study, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and meet all the deadlines for supporting documentation. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) priority-filing deadline is March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Once the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office receives your FAFSA information, you will be evaluated for financial need and a financial aid package will be determined. This package may include Federal Work-Study.

To initiate the eligibility process for Work-Study, you must first accept your Work-Study award on your student portal. You may then begin to review available on-campus and off-campus positions in [Cat PAWS](#). Once hired, you and your hiring department must complete and submit your FWS Eligibility form.

### **What kinds of Jobs can I work under the FWS?**

Work-Study jobs are available on-campus in departments (i.e. Library, Dining, and Recreation). Work-Study positions are also available with off-campus non-profit organizations, community based organizations, and government agencies.

### **Where do I look for or apply for FWS positions?**

Work-Study positions are listed in the UC Merced [Cat PAWS](#) website. FWS positions are listed under Federal Work Study (On-campus and Off-campus).

### **I have accepted an FWS position, what should I do next?**

When you accept a Federal Work-study position:

- Your employer must complete and sign the Work-Study Eligibility form and all other necessary hiring paperwork with you prior to the first day of work.
- Your hiring department will then direct you to the Career Services Center to complete University Payroll documents. Make sure you bring proper identification and other required documents.

### **Why do I need to sign a Federal Work-Study Eligibility Form when I get hired?**

The Work-Study eligibility form is used to authorize your participation in the program and it indicates the amount of your Work-Study eligibility. It also contains your responsibilities for being hired into an FWS position. Your FWS employer from whom you have accepted a Work-Study position must complete this form and sign it with you before you are able to start earning your work-study award.

### **When can I start working?**

You may begin working on or after the first day of your work-study eligibility date on the FWS Eligibility form, provided that your employer and payroll has processed all your University Payroll documents. Your employer will be notified when you can start working.

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

You may work up to eighteen (18) hours per week while classes are in session and up to (40) hours per week during break. This limit applies to all your student employment positions if you have another non-FWS job.

### **How much can I earn?**

The Work-Study award listed on your Work-Study Eligibility form represents the maximum amount you may earn (Federal and employer contributions combined) under the work-study program during the academic year. If you work in an on-campus position, you may continue to work and earn more than you FWS award. However any earnings over the award will not be paid under the FWS program and will be charged to the on-campus department you are working for. Any portion of your award that remains unearned at the end of the academic year will be forfeited, as it cannot be transferred to a subsequent award period.

### **How will I be paid?**

- Federal Work-Study employees are paid every other Wednesday.
- University will deposit your earnings directly into your bank account if you have direct deposit.
- Paper checks will be distributed by your On-campus FWS employer.

- If working for an Off-campus FWS job, your check will be available at the Career Services Center for pickup.

### **Are FWS earnings taxable?**

Work-Study earnings are considered taxable income. However, there are several factors determining the amount of your withholding, including the amount earned, marital status, and allowances claimed. Depending on how you complete your W-4 form (a document included with your employment paperwork) you may be able to opt for exemption from withholding.

### **Will Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment Insurance be withheld from my paycheck?**

No, as long as your appointment is less than 50% time (not actual hours worked).

### **Can I hold more than one (1) FWS job?**

No, You may hold only one Federal Work-Study job at a time. Therefore, you should select a job that provides enough hours to earn the total amount of your award. You may work under another campus employment position but not under FWS. Campus employment policy allows a student to work up to two jobs.

### **What are the procedures if I stop working in my FWS position?**

If you wish to terminate your FWS position during the year, your employer must complete a job change form.

### **What can be possible reasons for termination of my FWS job?**

Your employer may find it necessary to discharge you prior to the end of the employment period. Examples of reason for separation include:

- Your Work-Study award has been depleted;
- Your work-study award was cancelled because you:
  - did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress
  - not enrolled
  - withdrawn from school
  - taken an approved leave of absence
  - dismissed from school
  - graduated
- Your work performance is unsatisfactory. The employer's work performance expectations should be clearly communicated before and during the work period. Work site rules and University policies should be applied, as necessary, when performance is unsatisfactory.

### **Can I change to a different FWS job?**

In order to change jobs, you must first terminate your current FWS position. Your previous employer must complete a job change form before you can start in your new FWS job. Once the job change form is processed, your new hiring manager will have to request the updated FWS Award Eligibility Form from the financial aid office to make sure that your FWS earnings from the previous position are subtracted from the new award limit. The form is then signed and

submitted together with the rest of the hiring paperwork. You can then begin working in your new FWS position upon notification of the Career Services Center to your new supervisor that the paperwork was processed.

### **What if I already have a job on Campus?**

If you are currently employed on-campus:

- You may be able to convert your position into FWS only if your current employer has an available FWS position that is open.
- Your employer will need to complete your FWS eligibility form and submit it to the Career Services Center before you can begin participating under the program.

If you are employed with a non-profit community based organization or a government agency:

- Have your employer contact the Career Services Center at (209) 228-7272 to get more information on how they can participate in the program.

### **What is a “community service” position?**

Students employed through the FWS program have the opportunity to work in jobs designated by UC Merced as community service positions. Community service employers provide services that are designed to improve the quality of life for community residents, particularly low-income individuals, or to solve a particular problem related to their needs. Most of these positions will be with employers who are located off-campus and are also available on-campus. UC Merced encourages its students to seek employment with organizations that provide community service.

### **What if I drop below half-time enrollment (6 units for undergrad and 4 for grad), not have Satisfactory Academic Progress, or withdrawn from the University?**

If you do any of the above, you must terminate your Federal Work-Study employment immediately by notifying your employer and the Financial Aid Office.

## **Contact Information for the UC Merced Federal Work Study Program**



### **FWS job posting and hiring:**

**Career Services Center**

#### **Address and Telephone Numbers**

Address: **Kolligian Library Suite 127**

**5200 N. Lake Road**

**Merced, CA 95343**

Telephone: **(209) 228-7272**

Fax: **(209) 228-7648**

E-Mail: [penea@ucmerced.edu](mailto:penea@ucmerced.edu)

### **FWS eligibility:**

**Financial Aid and Scholarship Office**

#### **Address and Telephone Numbers**

Address: **Kolligian Library Rm 122**

**5200 N. Lake Road**

**Merced, CA 95343**

General Assistance and Student

Eligibility: **(209) 228-4243**

Fax: **(209) 228-7861**

E-Mail: [finaid@ucmerced.edu](mailto:finaid@ucmerced.edu)