



# NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

## CAREER SERVICES

### OFF-CAMPUS FEDERAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

#### Frequently Asked Questions

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

Federal Work-Study (FWS) refers to a federally funded program where the government subsidizes a portion of the student's employment wages. FWS is part of a student's financial aid package, and a student must meet certain income requirements in order to qualify for the program.

Students earn their FWS funds by working in on-campus jobs, or in some very limited cases, off-campus non-profit agencies. On-campus departments are responsible for paying 25% of the gross wages, and the FWS program funds 75% of the students' wages. Students receive a paycheck based on hourly rate and hours worked, and the money is intended to help offset educational expenses.

##### **What is the Off-Campus Federal Work-Study Program?**

The Off-Campus Federal Work-Study program enables students to earn their FWS funds while working in approved off-campus non-profit organizations. The non-profit organization serves as the employer of the student and pays 100% of the student's wages. However, the organization is reimbursed by Northern Michigan University for 75% of the student's gross wages on a monthly basis. The result is the organization pays just 25% of the student's wages or \$.25 for every \$1.00 paid.

##### **How can our organization benefit from this program?**

One of the most significant benefits is the ability to hire NMU FWS students and pay only 25% of the students' wages. Organizations will hopefully also benefit from the skills, knowledge and service the student employees provide to the agency.

##### **How do the students benefit?**

Some jobs may be directly related to the student's field of study or career interests, thereby making them invaluable employment experiences. Students also have the opportunity to build important job skills that will transfer to a number of different career fields. In addition, working for a non-profit organization provides NMU students the opportunity to become more directly involved in their community.

##### **Do students get placed into jobs?**

No – the employment opportunity is a choice for the student and the organization. Organizations can post opportunities with NMU Career Services, and interested FWS students can apply for the jobs in which they are interested. Organizations can interview and hire those FWS students they feel are best qualified for the jobs they have available. Organizations also determine the appropriate wage to pay.

##### **Are there restrictions on the type of work a FWS student can do?**

The FWS program does restrict students from performing certain activities in the course of their employment. Specifically, students cannot perform work that will result in the displacement of employed workers of the organization or impair its existing contracts for services. Students cannot be involved in any political activity or work for any political party. In addition, students cannot perform work which involves sectarian instruction or other religious activities of a church, or which involves the construction, operation, or maintenance of any facility used for sectarian instruction or a place of religious worship.

##### **Are the funds limited?**

Yes. Because FWS awards are based on the financial need of the student, each student has a fixed award amount (some students may have up to \$4,000). Students are able to work up to 24 hours/week; however, their FWS funds most likely won't allow them to work that many hours throughout the academic year (this program is not available during the summer semester). Staff in Career Services can assist the organization in determining how many hours a week the student should work in order not to exhaust the funds, and can also let the organization know when the funds are running low. Organizations can continue to employ the students if the FWS funds are exhausted, however, the organization must then pay 100% of the students' wages. Student FWS awards will be capped at the per-semester awarded amount. For a typical \$4,000/year award, the semester cap will be \$2,000. Fixed award amounts may be adjusted if funds allow.

### How does the reimbursement process work?

The organization will bill NMU **monthly or bi-monthly** for 75% of the gross student wages paid. NMU will then remit a check for the amount of the reimbursement. More specifics regarding the reimbursement process will be detailed in the agreement between NMU and the organization.

### What if we need to terminate a student's employment with our agency?

As the student's employer, the organization has the right to control and direct the work of the student, and to remove the student from the position if they feel it necessary.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE DEFINITION

According to Federal financial regulations, a portion of the Federal Work-Study allocation must be used to encourage students receiving FWS awards to participate in community service activities. Federal regulations define community service positions as designed to improve the quality of life for community residents, particularly low-income individuals, or solve particular problems related to their needs. These services include:

- Such fields as health care, literacy training, education (including tutorial services), welfare, social services, transportation, housing and neighborhood improvement, public safety, crime prevention and control, recreation, rural development and community improvement
- Work in service opportunities or youth corps as defined in Section 101 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, and service in the agencies, institutions and activities designated in Section 124(a) of that act
- Support for students with disabilities
- Activities in which the FWS student serves as a mentor for such purposes as tutoring, supporting educational and recreational activities, and counseling (including career counseling)

To be considered employed in a community service job for FWS purposes, the FWS student does not have to provide a "direct" service.

For more information, or to sign up, contact NMU Career Services.



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