

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditionally seen as a way for institutions to help students alleviate some of the financial demands placed on them, on-campus student employment has several additional benefits institutions can leverage to assist students along their collegiate journey. Throughout the years, institutions of higher education have advanced the use of the Federal Work-Study program and institutionally funded campus-based employment opportunities to provide students supporting campus operations with modest financial support (McClellan, Creager, & Savoca, 2018). However, if designed and operationalized effectively, institutions can use their on-campus student employment program to provide students with meaningful learning and engagement opportunities that can help with retention and build career-readiness skills.

The degree to which a particular on-campus employment opportunity serves as a high-quality, developmental experience can depend on the various work conditions, processes, and policies an institution has in place. To better understand how institutions actualize the benefits of on-campus employment, NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education conducted a landscape analysis that examined the current condition of on-campus employment opportunities and identified promising practices and components of programs characteristic of a highly impactful practice.

The landscape analysis adds to existing research and informs the field’s understanding in several areas:

- current data regarding the range of on-campus student employment opportunities by institutional type and sector;
- variety of promising practices being implemented at the division and/or institution level;
- degree to which student employment is being implemented and leveraged at the institution level as a student success strategy;
- extent to which institutions are assessing the effect of employment on various student success measures; and
- barriers to administering, sustaining, and improving student employment.

The bulk of this report unfolds in three sections. The first two sections provide foundational information on how student employment is currently administered at institutions. The first section presents survey data that highlight three main drivers that influence an institution’s student employment program: program goals, institutional contexts, and environmental factors. The second section answers general and operational questions about on-campus student employment programs, such as typical funding sources, management structure and key activities, top hiring areas across the campus, wage determination factors, and average hours worked. The third section draws on insights from an extensive review of existing research, campus interviews, and site visit data, and presents a list of capacity areas and practices that institutions can use to elevate their student employment program into a high-impact practice (see the table on the next page). Survey data analysis is used to show the current use of these practices at institutions.



TABLE ES1. Student Employment Capacity Areas

Leadership Engagement	
Goal Setting	Integrate retention and student learning as primary goals of student employment.
Institutional Alignment	Prioritize and invest in student employment resources to support campuswide student success goals.
Hiring Policies and Procedures	
Outreach and Awareness	Ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to apply for a position.
Application Procedures	Create a hiring experience that allows students to practice and develop professional job-seeking skills and provides students with clear information about job expectations.
Growth and Professional Development Opportunities	
Student Employee Supports	Provide professional development opportunities for students to further build critical career-readiness skills.
Supervisor Capacity	Provide clear guidelines and support for supervisors of student employees.
Recognition	Identify ways to recognize and highlight the contributions of student employees.
Student Learning Outcomes	
Learning Framework	Identify institutionwide student learning outcomes of employment opportunities.
Feedback and Reflection	Help student employees evaluate and document their learnings from their employment experience.
Assessment and Evaluation	
Student Success Data	Use data to understand and share the impact of student employment.

This report identifies ways to support and scale conditions of highly impactful employment programs, which include a focus on leadership engagement, equitable hiring processes, growth and professional development opportunities, student learning outcomes, and assessment and evaluation. Institutions that have demonstrated a willingness to advance the practice can engage in thoughtful planning and build upon their existing infrastructure to actualize goals for on-campus employment.

The landscape analysis will help inform and offer guidance for colleges and universities that consider on-campus employment as an underutilized resource and are seeking to transform the practice into a powerful means of advancing student success.

Five key findings emerge from the report.

1

Senior leadership engagement is critical.

Institutions with senior-level or cabinet member involvement seem better positioned to elevate their student employment program as a multifaceted student success strategy. Approximately 47% of survey respondents reported having senior-level or cabinet member involvement in vision and strategy-setting. Those with leadership involvement have a larger set of goals for their student employment program, and also were more likely to report having made investments in innovative ideas to advance the program than those without such leadership.

2

Multiple communication channels are needed to explain to students the benefits on working on-campus and to inform them about on-campus positions.

Survey respondents use centralized databases and job boards (87%), referrals (62%), job fairs (55%), social media (49%), new student orientation (49%), and print materials (48%) to try to reach and inform students about the availability and value of on-campus student employment opportunities and how to apply for those opportunities. While having multiple outreach strategies is important for helping students identify and ultimately secure on-campus employment positions, the most important outreach is for institutions to have all jobs posted in a central location. Requiring hiring departments to post open positions in a central location may help institutions shift away from word-of-mouth hiring that can unfairly advantage well-connected students over equally qualified peers who may not know such opportunities exist.

3

Supervisors are the linchpin of the student employee experience.

Over a quarter of survey respondents noted that student employee supports are provided at the hiring department or division level rather than at the institution level. As a result, often times supervisors serve as the primary facilitators of professional development and learning opportunities for student employees, and the extent to which supervisors are supported can determine whether an employment experience is menial or meaningful. Therefore, institutions should identify and develop helpful resources and tools to better prepare and engage supervisors for their critical role.

4 Institutions should have a shared understanding of what student employees should be and are actually learning.

Approximately 37% of survey respondents have or are developing a learning framework associated with student employment efforts. Such frameworks should define and categorize knowledge and skill sets students should acquire throughout their campus experience. Institutions can use frameworks to help students establish and articulate progress in meeting learning objectives and how what they are learning on the job connects with other experiences inside and outside the classroom.

5 Data usage for the purposes of analyzing and sharing the impact of student employment is an area for improvement among many institutions.

Survey data reveal that 35% of respondent institutions analyze data on hourly on-campus student employees for reasons other than federal and state employee compliance purposes. While data metrics related to compliance are important, more institutions should also assess data to understand student employee success, which can include metrics such as retention rates, completion rates, grade point averages, levels of engagement, and overall satisfaction rates. Such data can be used strategically to advance the program. The top three strategic uses of student employment data include raising awareness of and buy-in for student employment (59%), improving the institution's student employment structure and supports (53%), and supporting recruitment and enrollment efforts (47%).

REFERENCE

McClellan, G. S., Creager, K., & Savoca, M. (2018). *A good job: Campus employment as a high-impact practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.