

# Utilizing Federal Work-Study for Summer Service Projects in the Gulf Region

Many students would like to participate in hurricane recovery projects during the summer, and those opportunities certainly will be available. Some students, however, need to work full-time during the summer to contribute to their college tuition and expenses for the following year. Federal Work-Study (FWS) funds may be available from higher education institutions for eligible students employed in full-time work in the summer. Only a few colleges currently offer organized FWS summer programs, but individual students on willing campuses may be able to make arrangements for full-time FWS work.

## *How Students May be Able to Utilize Federal Work-Study for Summer Work in the Gulf Region*

In order for students to utilize Federal Work-Study funds for service work, they need to be eligible for this type of financial aid, which is based on need. The financial aid office at the student's institution determines the mix of loans, grants, and part-time work-study that is available for each student, and it sets the size of the FWS award in a contract with the student. Once eligible, the student, often aided by the financial aid office, seeks work in the types of jobs specified by FWS regulations.

Individual institutions determine their own pay scales for FWS jobs, and they set their own administrative structures, reporting, and schedules. Many institutions do not include a regular summer schedule for FWS jobs, but there is no federal rule that prohibits summer work or service for FWS students, and there is no rule that prohibits full-time summer work or service (even though the program is generally thought to be for part-time work).

Well in advance of a summer service opportunity, a student should approach a counselor in the financial aid or student employment office for consideration of the request. This is an important step, since the financial aid office will need time to process the FWS funds, create and execute contracts with community agencies, and initiate

other payroll mechanisms before the service begins. Using the benefits listed below, the student can make the best argument for why the request should be granted, including, if applicable, the importance of the summer service experience to the student's major, career, or completion of an academic program. The student also may want to enlist faculty members or community service learning staff as supporters.

Once the student's eligibility is confirmed and the financial aid office staff has agreed to the summer placement, the student will be able to contact a community agency and obtain a commitment for employment.

It may be helpful for the financial aid office personnel to review and adapt the materials that Stanford University has offered to other colleges for their use in administering an FWS Summer Service program. (For information on Stanford's Summer of Service program, go to [http://haas.stanford.edu/files/Docs/CSWS\\_CommO rgs\\_Sum06-10.doc](http://haas.stanford.edu/files/Docs/CSWS_CommO rgs_Sum06-10.doc).)

## *Student Benefits*

- Through full-time summer service work in communities of need, students are more able to see directly the impact of their work, feel wholly invested in the service, and learn more substantively from the service organization's staff and clients.
- For students who are carrying heavy academic loads or need to concentrate their attention on their studies, summer service work in the Gulf region will allow FWS-eligible students to combine their desire to help Gulf communities recover from the storms of 2005, without compromising their attention on their academic purposes and goals during the term.
- Summer opportunities can enrich students' learning experience by allowing them to work in settings where they are vitally needed. Students also can work in a unique

cultural and economic region that gives them experience and understanding beyond what they could ever have attained in ordinary summer jobs.

### ***Advantages for Nonprofit Organizations and Government Agencies***

- Nonprofit and grassroots organizations and governments in the Gulf region will benefit from the opportunity to add additional full-time staff over a sustained period of time. One full-time student for a concentrated period over the summer can provide much needed continuity for many agencies that support or rely on volunteers. For others, having a fulltime student employee may allow organizations to maintain their service levels during times when staff members are on vacation.
- Depending on the matching arrangements, the payroll costs for nonprofits and government agencies to get help from FWS summer service students can be minimal. Stanford University, for example, charges the receiving organization only 10 percent of students' wages and the university pays the rest. In addition the university is able to pay the student's salary and does not bill the agency for its portion of the salary until the end of the student's summer service, so there is only one transaction (and no payroll problems) for the agency.

### ***Benefits for Higher Education Institutions***

- While institutions are required to allocate a minimum of 7 percent of FWS funds to community service, many colleges and universities contribute far more. The average allocation in 2004–2005 was 16 percent. More than 100 colleges in California alone allocate more than 20 percent of FWS funds to community service. For institutions seeking to raise their contributions, including a summer option for student service can present a golden opportunity to make significant gains.
- For federal financial aid purposes, the fiscal year ends on June 30. Many colleges come to the end of their spring terms with FWS funds left over and may have to turn them back. (Turning funds back is not desirable, since it may mean that subsequent allocations to that institution may be cut back.) Financial aid offices may find that allowing full-time summer service in the Gulf is an excellent way to expend leftover funds.
- Developing summer service opportunities for students to participate in Gulf Coast rebuilding helps continue the civic mission and reach of the university by helping provide direct service that fills critical needs.