6 Tips to Increase Your Odds of Getting a Job at College

Apply early, don't wear flip-flops to the interview, and be entrepreneurial.

By Kim Clark
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As the competition for work-study and other campus jobs intensifies, college officials say students who follow these six steps are much more likely to earn the extra money they need for college.

[Read about how the government has slashed the number of work-study jobs in 2010.]

1. Apply early: Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid as soon as possible, and visit your college's financial aid office early in the spring to apply for a fall job. After getting swamped with more than 2,000 applications for the 72 work-study jobs available at her campus this fall, Wilma Hjellum, director of financial aid and veteran services at the Metropolitan Community College of Omaha, Neb., stopped accepting job applications April 1.

[Read about the new, easier FAFSA.]

2. Be persistent: If you miss out on a job when you first apply, ask about a waiting list, or contact the aid office midway through the semester, suggests Sam Collie, interim director of financial aid for Eastern Oregon University. Sometimes work-study jobs open up late in a semester if a student quits or drop out.

3. Be professional: College officials lucky enough to have work-study openings can now be picky. Applicants who dress professionally, show up on time, and treat the interview seriously are more likely to get hired, Hjellum says.

4. Spread your search: If you aren't offered a work-study job, look for other kinds of campus jobs. Some colleges, such as the University of Missouri, are creating additional part-time student jobs to replace laid-off staff. MU will offer work-study jobs to about 1,000 low-income students this fall, and will hire another 7,000 or so in other campus jobs. Jobs in the college's news bureau, for example, pay about $9 an hour, usually offer up to 17
hours of work a week, and allow students to earn about $4,000 a school year. Of course, students can also look off campus as well.

5. Start a small business: Management professor Craig Armstrong, who assigns his University of Alabama entrepreneurship students to start businesses two weeks after the semester begins with only $10 in startup money, said several students have figured out ways to make big profits. One former bartender made several thousand dollars by collecting used corks from bars and turning them into refrigerator magnets and bulletin boards that he sold back to the bars and online. Other students walked dogs, or sold water outside of sporting events. Students who can't find jobs can "find something that is a problem that you are having or see other people having," and figure out a way to solve it. "It doesn't take a lot of resources" to start up profitable small businesses, Armstrong says.

6. Don't overdo it: Research shows that students who work 10 to 15 hours a week do better in their classes than those who don't work at all. But students who work more than 20 hours a week have a higher dropout rate, in part because they have less time to study. Since adults who've earned bachelor's degrees generally have much higher wages and lower unemployment odds than those who haven't, it pays to sacrifice a little earnings during college to make sure the student succeeds in class and makes it to graduation.

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Government Cuts Thousands of College Work-Study Jobs

End of stimulus funding makes work-study jobs harder to get for college students

No MU Mention

By Kim Clark
Posted July 20, 2010

Students hoping to earn a little extra cash on campus this fall will have a tougher time as the number of federally funded work-study college jobs nationwide will drop by 162,000 to 768,000 for the 2010-2011 academic year. That's distressing news for students when the unemployment rate for young people continues to top 15 percent, and states have been cutting scholarship budgets, says Lindsay McCluskey, vice president of the United States Student Association. "It is

A spokesman for the Department of Education said the number of subsidized campus jobs has simply dropped back to its historical norm after climbing because of a temporary influx of stimulus funding. "The recovery act provided a much-needed boost to work study programs and other federal student aid programs. But significant challenges remain and all of us, both in the home and in the government, are having to do more work with less funding," said department spokesman Justin Hamilton. 

A few years ago, at the height of the economic boom, many college financial aid officials complained that campus jobs often went begging as students either didn't need the money or found better-paying jobs elsewhere. But now, financial aid officers around the country say they are swamped with applicants, as more of the nation's 19 million college students are looking for jobs to raise money for tuition.

Students can no longer assume that work-study jobs, which pay an average of about $1,500 an academic year, will be theirs for the asking, says Wilma Hjellum, director of financial aid and veteran services at the Metropolitan Community College of Omaha, Neb. Her college lost funding for 12 work-study positions when stimulus funds lapsed. The school will have work-study jobs for just 72 students this fall. More than 2,200 students asked for work-study jobs, she said.

[Read tips for finding a part-time job.]
Colleges like work-study jobs because the federal government pays up to 75 percent of the wages of needy students hired to help the college or local nonprofits. Most campuses have additional part-time job openings for at least some students who don't snag federally funded work-study jobs.

Aid officials recommend students opt for federally funded work-study jobs whenever possible because earnings from regular jobs can reduce students' eligibility for future need-based financial aid. Federal work-study earnings aren't counted in aid applications.

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Program aims to take more cars off campus
By ROBERT JOHNSON Monday, July 19, 2010

The University of Missouri recently announced a new campus program that can lower costs for students and employees, increase transportation options and help the environment. That program is called "WeCar," and it is going to be a big part of MU's future.

WeCar is a car-sharing service open to any MU student, faculty or staff member. After signing up and paying a fee, members have access to four automobiles parked at four locations on campus. Users pay a per-hour rental fee to drive the cars, which includes the fuel. WeCar estimates each one of its cars can replace 15 to 20 privately owned automobiles. That means MU could have 60 fewer automobiles on campus — a financial benefit to students, faculty and staff and a great benefit for the environment.

Owning an automobile is incredibly expensive and something many students can't afford. The American Automobile Association estimates that it costs $5,500 per year to maintain and operate a small sedan. That essentially increases the cost of a four-year education by a whopping $22,000! Instead of taking out loans to purchase a car, students could leave college with a lower debt load and have more disposable funds to spend.

With such a walkable, bikeable city as ours, students might find that they can live without a car if they have short-term access to one in times of need. This is especially true now that the city has a more efficient bus system, student housing that has dedicated bus service, and better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. For students who need to travel home to cities such as Kansas City, St. Louis or Chicago, there are van services, carpooling options or even the popular Mega Bus to take care of those needs in a very low-cost way.

WeCar is also a money-saver for faculty and staff. They can walk or bicycle to work more often, knowing that if they do have to leave campus to run an errand, they can use the shared car to do so.

From an environmental standpoint, there are two advantages to not having 60 people bring an automobile onto campus: parking and leaking fluids. Because the space required to park one car in a parking lot is about 300 square feet, having fewer automobiles frees up space for others to park.

However, the biggest benefit might be from having 60 fewer automobiles leaking fluids that ultimately get into our waterways. A leaking engine block or radiator is a major environmental problem. The EPA says used motor oil is the single biggest polluter of our lakes, streams and rivers. Because students on a budget often have older automobiles or defer maintenance, the problem could be even worse for them. The WeCar automobiles will be newer, used more frequently and well maintained.

The automobile is expensive and burdensome for students to own, employees to drive, the university to store, and the environment to withstand. The WeCar program solves all of those problems while still allowing people to have extra mobility for when bicycling, walking or public transportation is just not going to work for them. It's an idea whose time has come and will continue to grow in the future.

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