

College Student Workers

- In the late 1940's, 25% of 20 to 24-year-old college students were working;
- in the late 1950's, 44% were working;
- in the late 1960's, 51% were working;
- By the end of the 1980's, 56% were working.
(Kincaid "An Informal History" n.d.)
- In 1993, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that over 63% of students were working at a snapshot point in the academic year.
(O'Brien 1993)
- Over the course of an entire academic year, 81% of undergraduates worked at least part of the time.
(Knapp 1993)
- The median family income grew 73% in the 1980's; however, college costs increased 109% at public universities and 146% at private schools.
(Kincaid "Working Through College" n.d.)

On any ordinary day in the Learning Development Center, students can be seen working in our offices and labs. Mark picks up the phone in the main office, politely answers a question, and transfers the call. Calvin copies handouts and transparencies for a faculty presentation. Leslie shows another student how to register for notetaking services. Brian compiles data for the College Restoration Program. Erika moves from student to student in the Math Lab, helping them with problems from several different courses. Mayank meets the TRiO Student Support Services student he has been assigned to tutor in Physics. These student employees are learning to work with the public, to operate equipment and technology, and to assume responsibility. They understand the LDC's role within the larger context of RIT, they work in collaboration with professionals, and they often reinforce their own classroom learning. Like most other departments on campus, we depend heavily on our wonderful student workers, and we are convinced that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

In this issue of *LDC Lately...*, we report many ways in which student workers have gained knowledge, experience, and confidence from their jobs on campus. We invite you to join us in considering student employment as a teaching and learning opportunity.

History of Student Employment

Student employment goes back as far as our oldest university, Harvard, in 1636. During the colonial period, apprenticeships provided training and eventual admission to law, medicine, ministry, and teaching. Similar to our modern-day co-ops, apprenticeships were essentially training by employment over a period of time with increasing levels of responsibility. When the first universities appeared, they added a classroom component that, unlike apprenticeships in which masters provided financial assistance, students were expected to pay for their enrollment. As transportation improved, the number of young ambitious men who wanted the opportunity to experience a wider community of scholars grew (Kincaid "An Informal History").

The earliest college students simply hired themselves out. They found work as private tutors or law clerks, or work in maintenance or agriculture. As academic programs formalized, scholarships were established and jobs were set aside for needy students. Overall, however, the early university experience remained the province of those of wealthier means (Kincaid "An Informal History").

The state university system marks the next important stage of student employment. **The Land-Grant College Act of 1862** provided to each state 30,000 acres of federal land for each congressional representative. **The Second Morrill Act of 1890** went further to provide annual appropriations for these growing land-grant institutions. Universities, such as Cornell, Michigan State, and the University of Vermont, were established "to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts." These were large,

rural, and practical places with campus farms and laboratories that needed to be staffed. As such, the college community evolved and included residence halls, dining halls, sports facilities, and other services for which student workers were needed (Kincaid "An Informal History").

With the emergence of scientific agriculture and modern engineering, college became accessible to students from the lower and middle classes. Unlike their wealthier counterparts, these students did not come from families that depended on servants; rather these students were used to working and employment at college was a given. Eventually, high numbers of working students forced the university to organize the branch of financial aid (Kincaid "An Informal History").

In 1906, Herman Schneider, a professor of engineering at the University of Cincinnati, proposed the idea of cooperative education that combined practical career-related work with theoretical classroom study. His concept was quickly adopted by other technical programs, and it continues to be the model here today at RIT (Kincaid "An Informal History").

During the Depression, the federal government, under the New Deal, established the **National Youth Administration Student Work Program (NYA)** which provided jobs for college students. Similar to our current **Federal Work-Study Program (FWS)**, NYA was administered by individual universities following federal guidelines. The program ran from 1935 to 1943 and was criticized for offering job assignments that fell between two extremes: those that were highly academic and those of menial "leaf-raking" (Kincaid "An Informal History").

After World War II, the **GI Bill** further expanded the federal government's role in providing financial assistance to college students. Though it did not have an explicit employment component, the impact of the GI Bill caused public college enrollment to soar, and with it soared university support services, employing students while they attended college. However, there was still a large number of deserving and capable students who could not attend college due to financial obstacles. With the cold war and the launching of Sputnik, American leaders felt that a college-educated workforce was paramount. As a result, the **National Defense Education Act** passed which included America's first student loan program and federal grants to states for student aid (Kincaid "An Informal History").

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society era of the sixties marked the civil rights movement and the development of the **College Work-Study Program (CWS)**. Now the opportunity for college education was open to more lower-income students and students of color. With the first wave of the Baby Boomers reaching college age, enrollment again swelled, and so did services. The community college was founded and the "non-traditional" student (older, returning adults) joined the masses in higher education. **The 1972 Higher Education Act** promoted equality of opportunity, and aid went directly to students rather than to institutions, encouraging a free market approach to choosing colleges. In response, federal guidelines tightened, needs analysis became more formalized, and the concept of aid as entitlement arose (Kincaid "An Informal History").

In 1978, the Middle Income Assistance Act further widened aid eligibility and established the

Job Location and Development Program (JLD),

which provided off-campus jobs regardless of financial need. All of these programs required staff for administration, and more work-study opportunities for students. During the 1980's Reaganomics there was an effort to minimize government interference and therefore reduce government aid. Funding cuts and tighter eligibility restrictions shifted more costs to families and caused more students to work (Kincaid "An Informal History").

With the 1990's, Congress became concerned that funding for Work Study (WS) was being used for "in-house" labor that benefitted primarily the college, i.e., students working in menial campus jobs unrelated to career goals or the needs of public and non-profit agencies. As a result, colleges were required to spend at least 5% of WS funding to place students in largely off-campus, community service jobs. In 2000-01, the required percent increased to 7%, and Congress continues to this day to scrutinize what current WS students do (Kincaid "An Informal History").

Why Do Students Work?

According to Orszag and Whitmore, working college students tend to fall into one of the following two categories:

- students who work:
- workers who attend college.

The following discussion concerns itself with the former category of full-time college students who work part-time while attending school.

The most obvious reason students work is to earn money for expenses. However, other benefits have been identified. Mary L. Roar, in a paper presented on "Work on Campus: Benefits for Student and Institution," notes that "aid in defining career goals, increased possibilities for job placement, and enhanced overall personal development" are some of the positive factors which, according

to research, outweigh the negative factor of academic interference. Roar argues that of Chickering's seven vectors of development, "three are most advanced by student employment: competence, autonomy and purpose" (Roar abstract 1983). In 1992, with the support of the **National Association of Student Employment Administrators (NASEA)**, Cornell University's Yuko Mulugetta and Dennis Chavez studied the perceptions of students' academic work experience. Eighteen public and private colleges and universities participated (RIT among them), and over 13,000 questionnaires were administered to students across the country. Besides the top motivator of money, other common reasons why students work were:

- personal fulfillment
- gaining job experience
- establishing referrals/contacts
- social interaction
- academic enrichment

Most of the working students in this study felt their work experience contributed to their overall educational experience; however, "there were noticeable negative responses among those working in jobs typically found off-campus" (Mulugetta and Chavez 1994). In their 1991 book *How College Affects Students*, authors Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini note that off-campus employment negatively influenced both year-to-year persistence and bachelor's degree completion. They found that on-campus employment enhanced integration and involvement, whereas off-campus employment inhibited these characteristics.

Alexander Astin, in his 1993 book *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited*, states that "holding a part-time job on campus is positively associated with attainment of a bachelor's degree and with virtually all areas of self-

reported cognitive and affective growth...[increasing] the student's chances of being elected to a student office, tutoring other students, and attending recitals or concerts. It has positive effects on Liberalism, Leadership, and a commitment to the goals of promoting racial understanding and participating in programs to clean up the environment....Compared to students who spend an equivalent amount of time working off campus, students who are employed on campus are, almost by definition, in more frequent contact with other students and...faculty....This greater degree of immersion in the collegiate environment and culture more than compensates, in terms of student outcomes, for the time that students must devote to a part-time job on campus. Similar trade-offs are simply not available to the student whose part-time job is located off campus" (1). Astin's "Involvement Theory" holds that "students who are more actively involved in aspects of their college experience achieve higher grades, are more satisfied, and have higher persistence rates than students who are less actively involved" (Wilkie and Jones 1994).

In "Learning and Earning: Working in College," Jonathan M. Orszag, Peter R. Orszag, and Diane M. Whitmore (2001) state that *working part-time on campus increased retention because, they speculated, working on campus builds "connections to academic departments or the community at large, which in turn may make students more likely to stay in school"* (9). However, Orszag and Whitmore distinguish between working a limited number of hours on campus, such as ten hours per week, which has a positive impact, and working a significant number of hours a week, thirty-five or more, which has a negative impact. It's unclear at what point student employment shifts from being beneficial to being counterproductive. Generally speak-

ing, students at four-year colleges work fewer hours, and those who work on-campus tend to also work fewer hours (3-5).

Vincent Tinto conducted an extensive study on the reasons students leave college. In his 1987 book *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, Tinto concludes that employment during college can indeed harm persistence rates depending on the number of hours of work and the degree to which the employment removes the student from the campus community. Longer hours and off-campus employment were detrimental to persistence, whereas part-time on-campus employment was beneficial to persistence.

In terms of students' perceptions of the impact of part-time work on their academic performance, most felt there was "no effect" (Orszag and Whitmore 2001). In fact, there was a high correlation with the average number of hours worked and the student's academic performance. See chart A.

(Chart B)
Student-Reported Effect of Employment on their Academic Performance

# hrs worked /week	+ Effect	No Effect	-Effect
1-15	22.3	60.7	17.1
16-20	13.8	51.8	34.3
21-34	11.5	42.6	46.0
35+	9.7	35.0	55.4

Source: NCES Table 5

working students with those of working students and found the GPA distributions of both student populations were relatively similar.

Mulugetta and Chavez also found little difference in average GPAs of working freshmen and working upperclassmen: 2.9 versus 3.0 respectively. GPAs for both Federal Work Study and non-Federal Work Study students were the same, at 3.0 (1994).

Time and Time Management

In the Cornell study, Mulugetta and Chavez also addressed the reasons why students choose not to work. The primary reasons given for choosing not to work appear to be "a need to devote more time to studies, and conflict between class time and work schedules" (1). Indeed, 72% of non-working freshmen felt they could not work because they needed more study time. However, there is little evidence to support this common perception by parents, students and faculty that working detracts from studies. In fact, the

evidence suggests that study time is the last activity to suffer when students work. There was also "little difference in time spent reading for pleasure, volunteering, and attending parties or cultural events" (Kincaid "Working Through College" n.d.). The only activity that was significantly reduced was watching TV. A study by Scott Schnackenberg of time use of undergraduates from five universities found that 51% of non-working students report watching a daily minimum of three hours of TV, compared to 34% of students working part-time (McCartan 1988). And, as illustrated in Chart C, the GPA distribution of non-working students is relatively similar to that of part-time working students.

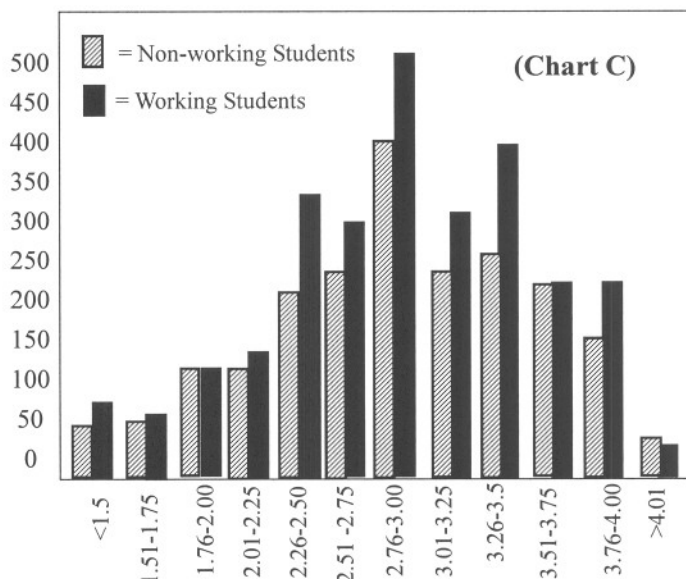
(Chart A)
Average GPA by Work Status

Employment Status	Mean GPA
Not Employed	2.69
Employed	2.72
1-10 hours	2.94
11-20 hours	2.75
21-30 hours	2.66
31-40 hours	2.63
41+ hours	2.69

Source: Gleason, Philip M., "College Student Employment, Academic Progress, and Postcollege Labor Market Success." *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 23(2), Spring 1993, Table 2

Another study found that students who worked ten or fewer hours a week had slightly higher GPAs, and those who worked thirty or more hours per week had slightly lower GPAs. Chart B shows average GPAs by work status without correcting for other attributes of the student (Orszag and Whitmore 2001). With the Cornell study, Mulugetta and Chavez compared the GPAs of non-

DISTRIBUTION OF GPAS FOR WORKING AND NON-WORKING STUDENT STUDENTS



Working in the Learning Development Center, we know that one of the most common difficulties students have in college is managing their time. Compared to high school, the relatively unstructured quality of college life can stymie the brightest minds. Perhaps one of the reasons why students who work ten or fewer hours per week on campus had slightly higher GPAs was because they were forced to follow a more structured schedule. An excerpt from a book published in 1915 that was literally recorded from a student's story about his experience of supporting his education through work reads,

How did I manage to crowd it all into one day? There wasn't any crowding; I was forced to reduce it to a system, and everything fitted in nicely....It's a curious fact, but it's true, that the busier I was, and the more I had to do, the more time I seemed to get for things outside and the more I enjoyed them. Some of the keenest moments of enjoyment that I ever remember having were the little intervals of rest between two jobs when I came back to my room. (Gauss 1915)

If busy is better, we must remember that too busy is worse. Students working 35 or more hours a week report that their studies are negatively impacted by their work: 40% say work restricts their class schedule; 36% believe work limits their class choices; 30% feel work limits the number of classes they enroll in; and 26% report that work limits their access to the library (Orszag and Whitmore 2001).

However, research indicates that the benefits of part-time on-campus work can certainly enrich the college experience. Student workers, even those in "so-called menial administrative type positions, often have the opportunity to acquire many transferable skills, and to establish personal contacts which can enhance their overall educational experience, and facilitate the students' retention" (Mulugetta and Chavez 1992). In addition, such qualities as improved self-reliance, appropriate workplace etiquette, increased responsibility, and better communication skills can result from part-time work during college.

From another point of view, employers have a strong bias for student work experience when hiring college grads for entry level positions. In a 1993 survey of 1200 human resource professionals conducted by Robert Foreman of UPS, there was significant agreement that part-time employment is "as important as grades, and that applicants with student

employment:

- produce better work
- accept supervision better
- are better time managers
- have better team skills
- make a more rapid transition
- have more realistic expectations

(Kincaid "Working Through College n.d.).

Between research and anecdotal evidence, it's clear that, generally speaking, everyone seems to benefit from college students working part-time on campus. It's a win-win situation—for the students, for the college, and for the real world employers.

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Kristy Mooney Graves, a graduate of our Psychology program, returned to RIT in the Fall of 2002 to assume the responsibilities of the Academic Accommodations Office at the Learning Development Center. She held a variety of jobs on campus and speaks very positively about the benefits of each one in setting the direction for her professional career..

As with many students, the need to find a job stemmed from financial concerns. Kristy landed a job her first week on campus as a caller for the RIT Telefund. Through training for the job and interactions with alums, Kristy discovered a great deal about RIT's history, its campus activities, and its regional and international connections.

Kristy's RIT employment was quite varied. Working for catering, she met Dr. Simone and saw the behind-the-scene preparations for large scale events on campus. Working in the Financial Aid office, she learned the policies and procedures for that office. The role of Sorority House Manager helped her to discover that she liked working with systems and management rather than with organizing programs for a group. When she moved into the Student Affairs area, Kristy began to identify a possible career path. She realized that her variety of job positions and her new connections with RIT Student Affairs and Student Government were preparing her for college level management or administration. Subsequently she looked for positions that would give her more exposure in new areas at RIT.

At this point she had established a network which included Linda Kuk and Frank Lamas, Student Affairs VPs. With their encouragement she applied for a coop position at LDC where she would be involved with providing services to students with disabilities. Because The Academic Accommodations office was being reorganized, it afforded her an opportunity to set policy and create new systems.

Kristy feels that working while you are in school more closely parallels a real life situation that calls for good time management and organizational skills. In many ways these demands prepare students for whatever is next - a coop, full-time work, or graduate studies. Student workers learn how to balance academics along with work and personal responsibilities. Student employee positions are available in almost any area that one would like to explore. All the experiences help to build a resume while at the same time providing professional skills and a few dollars in one's pocket. The only drawback she could identify was the problem of working too many hours.

Kristy has returned to RIT after completing a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration. Her network was intact immediately upon her return but she was amazed at the campus expansion. Kristy is a prime example of a student who took advantage of the opportunities offered by student employment. She helped support herself financially and, at the same time, developed skills and knowledge that ultimately led her to define a specific career path.



RIT Statistics of Student Workers*

(2001/2002 Academic Year)

All figures are for the time period of August 24, 2001 - August 23, 2002

Number of Student Workers: Approx. 5,000

Number of Student Jobs: 7,368

Number of hours per week (on average): 12 - 15

Total Student Earnings: \$13,280,840.00

* Thanks to Joanne Stuewe from Student Employment

Peer Tutoring at the LDC Math Lab

All RIT students, faculty, and staff are eligible to use the LDC Math Lab, a free, drop-in tutoring center which supports almost any mathematics course taught at RIT. It is open 41 hours each week, including evening hours on Tuesday and Wednesday. The lab is staffed by 3 LDC math faculty and about 15 student tutors, all of them strong in math and capable of tutoring a wide variety of math concepts. Ruth Jones has been coordinator of the LDC Math Lab for 15 years. She recruits, trains, schedules, and supervises tutors, and she has developed materials for the lab and for tutor training.

Ruth sees many advantages to hiring student tutors. “I think that one reason they like to work here is that they have ownership in making the lab go well. Once they come, they tend to stay – most openings occur when tutors graduate. Having them benefits us too – they’re experts in what’s going on in the classes.”

Ruth is encouraged by the increase of tutoring centers on campus. “It’s a good thing to see lots of areas where students can work as tutors. LDC is willing to work with other areas to develop tutor training modules. We want to support good things going on anywhere else on campus.”

Benefits to Student Tutors Working in the LDC Math Lab

Ruth Jones, Math Lab Coordinator, offers the following list of ways her student tutors benefit from teaching mathematics to other students in the LDC:

1. The tutors learn and relearn mathematics. Tutoring keeps it fresh for them.
2. They learn to be in charge of a working situation. They are usually in the lab without supervision. They have to be independent and make decisions.
3. They gain experience working with people. They work with students who are not like them, students from diverse backgrounds, students who are not natural math students. They learn to connect with students’ needs.
4. They develop skills in the art of teaching. Their training includes topics they may not have known, for example, learning styles. They learn patience and communication skills. Some use this skill later as graduate students, or as teachers. Several students have requested reference letters for graduate school assistantships.
5. They work alongside professionals. This is a meaningful connection, and the experience helps prepare them to move into the job market. It is also good preparation for a teaching assistantship; the transition is easier for them if they have had the tutoring experience.
6. Tutors learn to switch mental gears on the spot. They have to move comfortably from one topic to another and think on their feet.
7. Students tutor for the money, of course, but actually they do it because they love it – they enjoy explaining math to other students. They get great satisfaction from helping others succeed.

Other Peer Tutoring Opportunities at the LDC

Tutoring is also provided in other LDC programs for students who meet eligibility requirements outlined by their sponsoring grant agencies. All student tutors go through a training program, have opportunities for professional development, and are carefully supervised.

TRiO Student Support Services

One-on-one peer tutoring for specific courses is available to students who meet TRiO SSS criteria: documented disability, low income (determined by federal guidelines), first generation college. Since fall, 180 TRiO SSS students have received tutoring from 111 student tutors (about 300 students are on the TRiO SSS tutor database); 5 to 8 trained student math tutors assist with Daily Math drop-in sessions. Judy Bernhart coordinates peer tutoring for a specific course, and Karen Quinn coordinates Math Support. One tutor commented, “I go over their tests and quizzes, help them come up with better methods and approaches to solve problems, and in the process my own knowledge goes on increasing.”

HEOP

HEOP students are admitted to RIT according to HEOP guidelines and are eligible to receive peer tutoring for specific courses. Currently, 14 student tutors are working with 24 HEOP students. David McLuckie coordinates the HEOP peer tutoring program. According to David, “HEOP tutors learn how to teach and are encouraged to transfer and apply the knowledge they gain from

Student Worker Survey

Of the 238 students employed by the LDC, 95 responded to a recent LDC Student Employee Survey. Our findings include the following:

- Most hold one job and work between 5-10 hours per week.
- Their primary motivations for working at RIT are money, the easy location, and flexible scheduling.
- The most significant benefits are the paychecks, possible future references, and job enjoyment.
- The difficulties they experience working at RIT are time management and not earning enough money.
- They perceive that they benefit the department that hires them by extending services to more students, by offering their expertise, and by assisting with their general workload.
- They experience no change in their commitment to studies while they are working; if anything, their commitment increases.
- They report that working on campus reinforces their career goals and opens up other possibilities.
- They report that skills gained in communication, time management, socialization and organization will prepare them for future employment.

Written responses to open-ended questions offered additional information. The top advantages of working on campus were meeting and interacting with a variety of people, becoming more involved in activities on campus, and having a sense of ownership in the RIT community. One student observed, "I figured out I had skills that I hadn't been aware of." Another commented that his student job "makes a good day out of a bad day!" Although their main reason to seek on-campus employment is financial, the students generally feel very positive about their work experience and the benefits to be derived from it.

LDC Lately... at NYCLSA

Members of our editorial board will be presenting on the creation and merit of *LDC Lately...* at the 26th Annual Symposium of NY College Learning Skills Association in April 2003. We have found *LDC Lately...* to be an effective vehicle for communication and collaboration with the academic community at RIT.

LDC Lately... Editorial Board

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