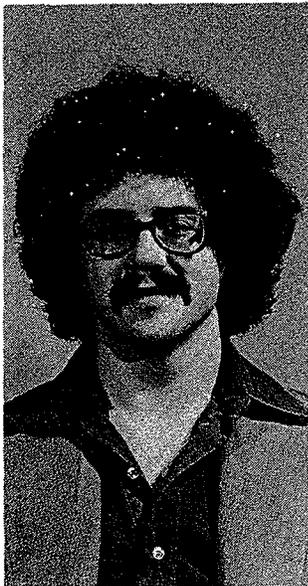


# MAKING THE COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO PLACEMENT APPROACHES

By Chad Lewis and Oren Glick

## Introduction

There are a variety of ways that the federal College Work-Study program can be administered. Edelstein (1975) describes nine resource, development, and placement methods for off-campus program development which can be used separately or in many different combinations.<sup>1</sup> Beal (1977), in surveying seven four-year private institutions in the Pacific Northwest, found five different combinations of student employment reporting lines, certification, and placement in evidence.<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Edelstein, "A Guide to Operating an Off-Campus Program," NASFAA and Project for Service Learning of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, May, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Phillip Beal, "Survey of Conference Schools Regarding Student Employment," Pacific Lutheran University, May, 1977.

Though institutional differences exist in the general administration of the College Work-Study program, the authors have found two basic approaches to placing students. These "approaches" are not categorical or pure types. The actual practices in any given institution may reflect a mixture of the two. Nevertheless, institutional practices as a whole predominantly reflect one or the other of the two approaches. This study will focus on these approaches to College Work-Study student placement.

The approaches have been classified as Type A and B:

#### Type A

The institution screens qualified students for federal Work-Study positions, generally through the institution's financial aid and/or placement or student employment office. This is most often accomplished through the "matching" of students' interests with on or off-campus employers' needs. When a match is obtained, students are referred for possible placement.

Requests for Work-Study help are generally directed through the office referring students.

#### Type B

The institution does *not* generally screen qualified Work-Study students. The responsibility for job placement rests primarily with the student. Typically, the financial aids office will certify eligibility. Students are then referred to the posted Work-Study job listings, and go themselves to employers to be interviewed for jobs in which they are interested.

Requests for Work-Study help from prospective employers are generally directed but are not limited to a predefined central area for posting (i.e., placement office, student union).

In both approaches, the institution provides some type of authorization or referral form to qualified students to present at the time of interview or introduction to employers.

It would seem the Type B approach is more administratively efficient as less staff hours are necessary because counseling with students for the purpose of matching interests and jobs is minimized.

The Type B approach might also facilitate greater utilization of Work-Study program funds as staff hours saved through minimization of matching students with jobs could be used in the field developing Work-Study positions. Students would then have more and varied employment opportunities and Work-Study administration would be more effective as a result of a greater utilization of Work-Study program funds.

The authors set out to determine whether the Type B approach to Work-Study program administration is more efficient and effective and to test the following hypotheses:

#### H1

Institutions utilizing a Type B approach spend a significantly lower number of staff hours facilitating the placement of Work-Study students than do institutions utilizing a Type A approach.

## H2

Institutions utilizing a Type B approach spend a significantly higher percentage of their federal Work-Study funds than do institutions utilizing a Type A approach.

### *Methodology*

All two and four year public and private institutions in Washington State were contacted by telephone by one of the authors.

Financial aid officers were first read verbatim the two approaches (Type A and B) specified earlier. They were then asked to select the type more characteristic of their own institutional federal College Work-Study program. It was acknowledged that a given institution might combine the types. For example, some institutions may utilize a Type A approach on-campus and a Type B approach off-campus. However, financial aid officers were asked to select the predominant approach actually employed.

Next, financial aid officers were asked to report the total amount of federal Work-Study program funds, including supplements, authorized and expended during Fiscal Year 1977. Work-Study program expenditures were to include funds claimed as administrative overhead. In short, aid officers were asked for the figures as they would appear on part IV-3 and 10 of the Institutional Fiscal Operations Report. The figures reported were sometimes estimates as the survey was conducted during early August.

Financial aid officers were then asked to estimate the average number of staff hours spent facilitating the placement of Work-Study students. "Facilitating" the placement of Work-Study students was defined as any coordination of effort between the institution, student, and employer to place and maintain students in their jobs. Respondents were asked not to include staff time spent reviewing applications and awarding aid or processing pay-roll information.

Upon completion of the survey questions, several aid officers were asked to comment upon their institution's process for placing Work-Study students.

Two of the survey responses were not included in the analysis. The respondents in question could not reply clearly to the questions posed.

The period covered by the survey was the 1977 Fiscal Year.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression techniques with Type A and B institutions coded as categorical variables. Two analyses were performed, one for each of the hypotheses. In the case of the first hypothesis, in which "average weekly staff hours" was the dependent variable, total amount of allocation was used as a covariate.

The results report the respective means, the F values (F), the degrees of freedom (df), and the associated probabilities (P) for the Type A vs. Type B comparisons.

### *Results*

Screening of College Work-Study recipients prior to job referral was the approach practiced by a clear majority (79%) of the institutions surveyed. Thirty-four institutions identified themselves as Type A institutions. Nine institutions chose Type B.

It was also found that Type B institutions, which deemphasize the matching of Work-Study students with jobs, were allocated significantly more funds than were institutions selecting Type A ( $F=6.26$ ,  $df=1.40$ ;  $P=.05$ ). Type A institutions were allocated an average of \$158,558 and Type B institutions \$390,933 for the 1977 Fiscal Year.

#### H1

Even with the larger average allocation, Type B institutions reported less average staff time spent per week facilitating the placement of Work-Study students. (15.55 staff hours per week for Type A institutions; \$158,558 average allocation; 12.89 staff hours per week for Type B; \$390,933 average allocation). When the total amount of funds allocated is controlled between the two types, this difference is an average of 11.4 fewer staff hours per week (15.76 staff hours per week for Type A institutions; 4.39 for Type B) and is statistically significant ( $F=15.6$ ;  $df=2.39$ ;  $P<.01$ ).

The conclusion is therefore warranted that Type B institutions, given an equal allocation of federal Work-Study funds, require significantly fewer staff hours to facilitate the placement of College Work-Study students. Thus, the Type B approach is more efficient as hypothesized.

#### H2

The Type B approach was not found to be significantly more effective. However, Type B institutions did expend a higher percentage of their total Work-Study allocation (98% for Type B institutions, 93% for Type A). This difference, though favoring the Type B approach, is not significant. When the total amount of funds allocated between the two types is controlled, the difference remains about the same (96% vs. 92%).

The results of the survey therefore suggest that neither approach, as defined, significantly affected the utilization of Work-Study funds.

#### *Discussion*

If placing the primary responsibility for College Work-Study job placement upon the student is more administratively efficient, and at least as effective, it would seem there would be a wider endorsement of this approach. There appear to be several reasons why this is not the case.

One reason is suggested in this statement by Adams and Stephens (1970), ". . . as more jobs and wider diversity of work become available to students, it becomes virtually impossible to make proper referrals, except as job responsibilities and student abilities are matched. If such articulation is not done, employers become dissatisfied and students become frustrated."<sup>3</sup>

Some of the financial aid officers surveyed also supported this assumption.

However, Adams and Stephens also state, ". . . as can be readily seen this fitting of students and jobs is not a simple task; mistakes will be made on occasion. The resultant adjustment of errors probably will indicate students concerned will need or should be located in other jobs."<sup>4</sup> It has been the experience of the authors that such problems occur frequently and can require a significant

<sup>3</sup> Frank C. Adams, Clarence W. Stephens, "College and University Student Work Programs: Implications and Implementations," Southern Illinois University Press, 1970 P. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, P. 15.

amount of staff time to resolve. One of the institutions surveyed by Beal, for example, switched to a Type B approach because "... it was too much of a burden for the student employment officer to place students in positions that in many cases turned out to be unsatisfactory."<sup>5</sup>

The findings of this survey support Edelstein's claim that by letting students take the initiative for job placement, these placements will take less time administratively. He also claims that such initiative will increase the probability that the job selected will be in the student's interest area.<sup>6</sup> According to two studies cited by Edelstein, work productivity and job satisfaction are increased when a student's job is in an interest area.<sup>7</sup> These findings suggest that job turnover and employer dissatisfaction could be reduced if a Type B approach is employed. Furthermore, elimination or deemphasization of "matching" as described in the Type B approach places employers in the position of directly interviewing and selecting students for themselves. Employers must then assume the responsibility for an unsuitable selection, thereby reducing a potential source of conflict for the financial aid and/or student employment office.

Lack of administrative control is another potential concern in an approach placing the responsibility for Work-Study job placement upon the student. Adams, Stephens and Bates (1973) strongly support the need to centralize all student employment so the neediest and/or those with high academic potential are served first.<sup>8</sup> The authors agree with this concept. Conceivably, an institution could endorse either approach to Work-Study student placement and utilize the centralized method described by Adams, Stephens and Bates. Both approaches described require central authorization. Consequently, an institution is not precluded from requiring that such authorization be centralized and available only to students with financial need and/or high academic potential.

Some of the financial aid officers surveyed were concerned that institutional under or overutilization of Work-Study funds might occur in a Type B approach. It has been shown that College Work-Study program underutilization was not a significant factor in institutions where most Work-Study students found jobs for themselves during 1976-77. Program overutilization was also not indicated as being a significant problem. Proper determination of Work-Study eligibility and a system for preventing over-awards to individual students remains necessary regardless of the placement approach employed.

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<sup>5</sup> Phillip Beal, "Survey of Conference Schools Regarding Student Employment."

<sup>6</sup> Fritz Edelstein, "A Guide to Operating an Off-Campus Program," P. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Natalie Friedman, *The Federal College Work-Study Program*, Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University (Washington, DC DHEW-OE), 1973.  
John Jennetten, *Off-Campus Employment Under the College-Work Study Program*, 1974 (a dissertation).

<sup>8</sup> Frank C. Adams, Clarence W. Stephens, "College and University Student Work Programs: Implications and Implementations," P. 76.

Gail Bates, "The Utilization of On-Campus Employment in a Student Aid Program," *The Journal of Student Financial Aid*, Volume 3, No. 1, March 1973.

The problem of individual unmet need in the case where a student is qualified for Work-Study but cannot find a job is a more difficult question to resolve. Philosophically, the authors contend that qualification for Work-Study is not a promise of a job. Such qualification is no more than an opportunity to work if a suitable job can be located. Matching a student with a job will not guarantee that the student will work, or be suitable to the employer. Requiring that a student find his or her own job also does not guarantee the student will work or even find a job. The only clear solution in the case of a student who cannot or will not work is that there be sufficient other institutional resources available to fill the unmet need. This is a dilemma that exists regardless of the placement approach used. Careful planning on the part of financial aid officers and clearly outlined expectations regarding student and institutional responsibilities can reduce some of the problems associated with unemployed Work-Study students.

An existing philosophy of *in loco parentis* may also be cited as a contributing factor in some of the institutions emphasizing the matching of Work-Study students with jobs. This philosophy as described by Crookston (1970) involves a "Parental" concern on the part of the institution for the protection and welfare of students.<sup>9</sup> The authors contend that in practice *in loco parentis* does not serve the best interest of students.

Locating Work-Study employment may seem less traumatic for a student if the student is matched with a job and then referred for placement. But what of students who spend several years in such an employment environment? Will these students be adequately prepared for a job search after leaving the institution?

It is the authors' contention that the selection process for a Work-Study program should approximate the environment students will find upon leaving the institution. Competition for Work-Study jobs should be fostered. Besides encouraging students to improve their job-finding skills, such competition could conceivably improve the quality of a Work-Study student work force. As they go through the process of finding Work-Study employment, students should be encouraged to think not only in terms of finding part-time work in the present, but also in terms of the skills necessary to find a meaningful position in the future. As Bolles (1972) states; "he or she who gets hired is not necessarily the one who can do the job best; but the one that knows the most about how to get hired."<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion

The present study has shown that administrative approaches which place the initiative for federal Work-Study job placement upon the student can improve program efficiency, without significantly affecting administrative effectiveness

<sup>9</sup> Burns Crookston, "An Organizational Model for Student Development" (N.W. College Personnel Association, Gearhart, Oregon, October, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> Richard N. Bolles, "A Practical Manual for Job Hunters and Career Changers: What Color is Your Parachute?" 10-Speed Press 1972; Revised 1977, P. 152.

(as determined by degree of Work-Study program utilization). Also discussed were other possible advantages for the student employer and institution inherent in a "Type B" approach.

It would seem that the manner in which institutions facilitate the placement of Work-Study students would have significant bearing upon program utilization. However, as stated, the authors did not find a significant difference between the administrative approaches to be present. Further research is needed to determine the causes for this finding, and to identify clearly other variables affecting Work-Study program utilization.

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