

On-Campus Employment: A Smart Choice for Students?

Zlata Tskhovrebova

Abstract

This paper discusses the pros and cons of working on campus. On-campus jobs help students financially and provide valuable career skills. The quality of these jobs depends on the work environment and support from the institution. Campus employment can help students build professional networks, gain experience, and improve job search skills. However, balancing work and studies can be difficult, leading to time management issues and possibly lower academic performance. Some jobs may also not align with students' career goals. Despite these challenges, the benefits, such as gaining work experience, improving time management, and building professional connections, make on-campus employment a valuable opportunity for students.

Keywords

On-campus work, advantages, disadvantages

Suggested Citation

Tskhovrebova, Z. (2025). On-campus employment: A smart choice for students? *Journal of the Student Personnel Association at Indiana University*, 14-17.

Zlata Tskhovrebova (she/her) is a first-year international master's student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Program at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB). Prior to her time at IU, she taught in K-12 schools in Russia. She is currently serving as a graduate assistant in the Office of Residence Life at IU, where she supervises 12 Resident Assistants (RAs). Zlata has also completed practicum experiences with the Indiana University School of Medicine. Zlata is passionate about helping college students develop and reach their full potential to become the best versions of themselves!

Traditionally viewed as a means for institutions to help students ease the financial burdens they face, on-campus student employment can support students throughout their college experience (Burnside et al., 2019). The work environment and institution's policies influence the quality of an on-campus job. When management is supportive, expectations are clear, and there are opportunities for skill development, the overall work experience is improved, allowing students to acquire valuable skills such as communication, time management, leadership, problem solving and teamwork. These qualities will benefit their future careers (Lai et al., 2022). On-campus jobs offer students valuable opportunities to gain financial independence, build professional networks, and develop essential skills for their future careers. However, the challenge of balancing work with academic responsibilities can lead to increased stress and poor educational performance, especially if the job does not align with the student's academic or career goals. This paper will explore both the advantages, such as skill development and networking opportunities, and the disadvantages, like time management struggles and potential impacts on academic success, of on-campus employment.

According to Barron and Anastasiadou (2009), on-campus jobs come in many forms and give an opportunity for students to experience various work environments. For example, students can choose a quiet and sedentary job, such as working behind a desk in an office, or they can engage in more active roles, such as working in sports recreation centers. This variety helps students discover their interests and strengths. Helens-Hart (2019) created an Employability Self-Assessment to help students identify their skills and strengths, which are key factors in enhancing their employability. The assessment also guides students in recognizing areas for growth and improving their ability to adapt to changing job markets.

Student employment is also known to help build professional connections and social relationships that are valuable for future careers. It offers key opportunities for socializing into workplace culture, including industry-specific practices, and can enhance job search effectiveness, career planning, and the ability to articulate achievements to potential employers (Lai et al., 2022). According to Burnes' study (2018), students who engaged in on-campus employment programs were more likely to secure full-time positions within six months of graduation, as the experience provided them with both relevant skills and networking opportunities.

Campus employment also helps students engage in new tasks, connect with a diverse community, and build their professional networks. It provides valuable hands-on experience that allows students to develop essentially. These experiences enrich students' academic journeys and prepare them for future career opportunities, making them more competitive in the job market.

At the same time, campus employment has its downsides. Combining work and studying can be a challenge. Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) found that new students balancing a full-time academic load with a part-time job were more likely to experience stress. Juggling full-time studies, part-time work, and student debt can also negatively impact students' physical and mental health (Barron & Anastasiadou, 2009). Therefore, these factors can lead students to a hectic lifestyle, causing them to fall behind in their academic work, feel overwhelmed, and struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Ktoridou et al., 2021).

According to Burnside et al. (2019), employment can reduce the students' attitude and commitment to their studies, with poor lecture attendance due to work commitments possibly contributing to higher student dropout rates. Moreover, some campus jobs may not align with students' academic or career goals, reducing the relevance of their work experience. This can prevent students from gaining industry-specific skills, which are critical for their career development. Additionally, the pressure of balancing both work and study may lead to burnout, negatively impacting both academic performance and overall well-being.

I believe the benefits of campus employment far outweigh any potential downsides. While working on campus, students become more financially responsible and develop a greater sense of accountability. They enhance their time management skills and learn to balance academic responsibilities with job commitments, which are essential skills in both academic and professional settings. Additionally, campus employment gives students valuable experience that helps them build professional networks, gain practical skills, and increase their career readiness. Furthermore, the hands-on learning opportunities provided by on-campus jobs allow students to gain real-world experience in a supportive environment, setting them up for success in their future careers. Despite the challenges, the personal and professional growth that comes from balancing work and study prepares students for life after graduation, making the experience highly beneficial in the long term.

References

- Barron, P., & Anastasiadou, C. (2009). Student part-time employment: Implications, challenges and opportunities for higher education. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 21(2), 140–153.
- Burnside, O., Wesley, A., Wesaw, A., & Parnell, A. (2019). Employing student success: A comprehensive examination of on-campus student employment. *NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED605714>
- Burnes, M. (2018). *The effects of a campus-wide student employment program on securing full-time employment, salary, and job satisfaction after graduation* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama) University of Alabama Repository. <http://ir.ua.edu/handle/123456789/5388>
- Helens-Hart, R. (2019). The employability self-assessment: Identifying and appraising career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital. *Management Teaching Review*, 4(1), 6–13.
- Jogaratham, G., & Buchanan, P. (2004). “Balancing the demands of school and work: Stress and employed hospitality students” *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16(4), 237–245.
- Ktoridou, D., Epaminonda, E., & Efthymiou, L. (2021, April 21-23). *In-campus work and study: Motivation, challenges, benefits, skills developed and impact on studies*. 2021 IEEE Global Engineering Education Conference (EDUCON), Vienna, Austria.
- Lai, J.W.M., De Nobile, J., Bower, M., & Breyer, Y. (2022) Comprehensive evaluation of the use of technology in education – validation with a cohort of global open online learners. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27, 9877–9911.