The Working Student’s Experience:
The hidden costs of working on college student success, engagement, and retention

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June 3, 2007: AIR Kansas City

Overview

- Growth of full-time students who work
  - 36% in 1973 to 48% in 2003
  - 17% (1973) to 30% (2003) work more than 20hrs/week (Baum, 2005)
- Reasons students work
  - College costs (Baum, 2005)
  - Lifestyle choices
  - Career Experiences (Perna, 2006)

Overview

- 1940
  - 4% of 16-year-old males and 1% of high school females worked (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1980)
- 1980
  - 75% of high school students worked during high school
- Studies have indicated that market place work during high school has a similarly detrimental effect on high school progress
- However, a modest amount of high school work may have positive effects on education

Research Questions

- What factors are associated with the decision to work on- or off campus?
- What are student motivators for working?
- What are the impacts of working on student engagement?

Data

- National Survey of Student Engagement
  - Assesses the extent to which students:
    - Engage in empirically-vetted good educational practices
    - Perceive that their institution emphasizes these practices
    - Perceive that they have developed as a result of their college experiences
  - Administered to random selection of FY and SN students at participating institutions
Data

- Experimental Items
  - Distributed to students at 30 schools which participated in NSSE
  - Over 6000 usable respondents
- Questions asked about:
  - Motivations for working
  - Workplace environment
  - Earnings, Debt, and Expenses
- Merged with NSSE survey responses about:
  - Hours worked on/off campus
  - Engagement Scales
  - Grades

Working On Campus

- Institutional Characteristics
  - 32% of Students work on campus
    - Students at:
      - Private
      - More Selective
      - More Rural
      - Bacc (vs. Masters)
      - With higher % of students on fin. aid
      - Larger
      - More likely to work on campus

  - Odds Ratio
    - Private: 1.06
    - Selectivity: 1.23
    - Locale: 1.15
    - Doctoral: 1.35
    - Baccalaureate: 1.45
    - Other Carnegie: 1.35
    - % Financial Aid: 1.02
    - In State Tuition: 1.02
    - Out State Tuition: 1.02
    - Total Size: 1.02

Working Off Campus

- Institutional Characteristics
  - 41% of students work off campus
    - Students less likely to work off campus at:
      - Private, More Selective, More Rural, Bacc (vs. Masters), higher % of students on fin. aid, Larger Schools
    - Students more likely to work off campus at schools with higher in state tuition

  - Odds Ratio
    - Private: 0.33
    - Selectivity: 0.85
    - Locale: 0.93
    - Doctoral: 1.24
    - Baccalaureate: 0.54
    - Other Carnegie: 1.10
    - % Financial Aid: 1.00
    - In State Tuition: 1.02
    - Out State Tuition: 0.93
    - Total Size: 0.98

Working On Campus

- Student Characteristics
  - More Likely to Work on Campus
    - Female (1.42)
    - Black (3.09)
    - Latinos (1.63)
    - Higher SATs (1.00)
    - Seniors (1.36)

  - Less Likely to Work on Campus
    - Older (.714)
    - Transfer (.707)
    - Greek Life (.844)
    - Higher Father's Ed (.919)
    - Business (.715)
    - Education (.706)
    - Pre-Professional (.663)

Working Off Campus

- Student Characteristics
  - More Likely to Work Off Campus
    - Female (1.19)
    - Older (1.32)
    - Transfer (1.28)
    - Seniors (1.32)

  - Less Likely to Work Off Campus
    - Athletes (.67)
    - Full Time (.602)
    - Higher Father's Ed (.933)
    - Black (.451)
    - Higher SAT (.999)
    - Engineering (.663)

Student Motivators for Working

- To pay college tuition and fees
- To pay for school books and supplies
- To pay for education-related debts
- To pay for living expenses
- To pay for transportation expenses
- To gain experience in a field
- Requirement of your academic program
- To support your family
- Parents/Family insist that you work while in school
- Entertainment/Social Expenses
- Continuing a job you held prior to college
- Non-education debts
- To increase your savings for the future
Effects of Work on Engagement: Off Campus

Discussion

Students who don’t need to work
- Share what we know with students/parents
- Effects of working
- Assist students in scaling back material expectations
- Assist students in finding a good work to school ratio
- Encourage students to be intentional
  - Work smarter – find employment in areas of interest
  - Share priorities with employer
  - Work on campus

Further Research/Analyses
- Exploring some of the interaction effects
- Limiting some of the analyses to smaller groups: just non-trad students, just first year students, etc
- Qualitative work to better determine where the benefits from working on campus come from

Discussion

Students who need to work
- Provide a support system
  - Specific FYE courses and targeted orientation
  - Support Service hours that are convenient
- Help create realistic expectations and goals
  - Understand students’ educational expectations
  - Have a plan for stopping out and the subsequent return
- Involve significant others where possible
  - Family Orientation
  - Encourage student to discuss difficulties and challenges

Questions

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Copy of presentation and paper at www.nsse.iub.edu