

Access

Affordability

Achievement

“State Work Study provided me with a unique opportunity to experience what it’s like to put classroom learning to work in real life situations . . . I’ve developed a better work ethic, improved my interpersonal skills, and have a deeper understanding of what it takes to get things done in my field.”

— SWS Student Teacher

“Without State Work Study, our business would not have made nearly the progress, or been able to sustain the level of growth, especially in this difficult economic environment. Many of the students we’ve helped train over the years have been hired as full-time employees after graduation. SWS is a win-win for both employers and students.”

— SWS Employer, Web Design



WASHINGTON
OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS



Washington State Work Study Program

The State Work Study (SWS) program helps students earn money for college while gaining valuable work experience, often in jobs related to their academic and career goals.

The state's public two-year and four-year colleges and universities, and many independent institutions, offer this form of financial assistance to eligible students.

Benefits to Students and Employers

- SWS helps undergraduate and graduate students pay for part of their college costs now rather than deferring those costs in the form of added debt when they graduate.
- The program serves low-income and middle-income students. Without the program, many of these students might not be able to attend college.
- Students develop valuable career skills and job connections. Many gain experience in fields directly related to their studies.
- Research indicates that students who work between 10 and 19 hours per week tend to persist in their degree programs at higher rates than other financially needy students.
- Employers gain access to a well-educated and highly motivated pool of workers who help them operate more productively and profitably. Employers often hire SWS students after graduation.

Benefits to Washington

- Annual employer contributions help the state leverage its financial aid resources to cover a greater number of needy students. This, in turn, contributes to rising levels of educational attainment statewide.
- In 2011-12, the more than \$3 million in additional student aid generated through employer matching contributions represented about a 40 percent return on investment for Washington taxpayers.



"It's really hard for new graduates to get jobs if they don't have practical experience that sets them apart from all other applicants vying for limited employment opportunities."

"Through my State Work Study position in the information technology area, I am developing a range of skills while in school that I believe will give me a lot more choices in my career path once I've graduated."

— SWS Student



Program results

Partnering with more than 1,500 Washington employers who match a portion of state funds, about 3,500 students earned more than \$11 million in 2011-12 SWS wages by working up to 19 hours a week. Employers contributed more than \$3 million of that total.

In recent years, student and employer demand for SWS support has exceeded program resources, especially during the economic downturn. Not meeting this demand has significant consequences.

- 83 percent of students have cited SWS support as critical to the successful pursuit of their degree.
- 71 percent of students have indicated they would not be able to afford to stay in school without SWS.
- 86 percent have indicated SWS helped them clarify their educational and career goals.
- 94 percent believe that SWS work experiences have made them more marketable to future employers.

Emerging issues

The SWS program continues to adjust to new funding realities.

- Total program funding was reduced 66 percent between 2009-11 and 2011-13.
 - The 2012-13 fiscal year state appropriation is \$7.8 million.
- The number of students earning SWS wages has declined from 8,500 in 2009-10 to about 3,500 in 2011-12.
- Historically, the SWS program has targeted a service level of 1 in 12 needy students. In recent years, the service level has declined to 1 in 35 needy resident students.
- Increased employer matching requirements, fewer awarded students and increased competition for students have negatively impacted employer participation levels.

For more information contact:

Rachelle Sharpe, Director of Student Financial Assistance
rachelles@wsac.wa.gov or 360-753-7872.

Student financial aid programs in Washington are known collectively as Opportunity Pathways. The Washington Student Achievement Council administers these programs, helping tens of thousands students annually earn college certificates and degrees.