

**National Association of
Student Financial Aid Administrators'
Federal Work-Study Research:**

NATIONAL SURVEY REPORT

Published June 2016



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The research was done through a partnership between NASFAA and Public Agenda.

ABOUT NASFAA

NASFAA is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 20,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools across the country. NASFAA member institutions serve nine out of every 10 undergraduates in the United States. Based in Washington, DC, NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators. For more information, visit www.nasfaa.org.

ABOUT PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a nonprofit organization that helps diverse leaders and citizens navigate divisive, complex issues. Through nonpartisan research and engagement, it provides people with the insights and support they need to arrive at workable solutions on critical issues, regardless of their differences. Since 1975, Public Agenda has helped foster progress on higher education affordability, achievement gaps, community college completion, use of technology and innovation, and other higher education issues. Find Public Agenda online at PublicAgenda.org, on Facebook at facebook.com/PublicAgenda, and on Twitter at [@PublicAgenda](https://twitter.com/PublicAgenda).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) aims to improve the understanding, delivery, and effectiveness of Federal Work-Study (FWS) in U.S. colleges and universities. In conjunction with Public Agenda, NASFAA created surveys to capture information on best practices and innovative programs in FWS. We sent these surveys to staff at colleges and universities across the United States who work with FWS programs. Of the 1,885 total respondents, the final database included 1,207 respondents in financial aid positions (64% of total respondents) and 678 respondents working in other departments (36% of total respondents).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SURVEY'S MAIN FINDINGS

- Sixty-five percent of respondents reported that their FWS allocation was “too little.”
- Eighteen percent of respondents reported that their institution had, at some point in the past five years, returned unspent FWS money to the U.S. Department of Education. Of those returning more than 10% of their allocation, 74% had their allocation subsequently reduced.
- Thirty-three percent of financial aid staff thought that fewer than 50% of students awarded FWS at their institution last year went on to take a FWS job. However, 31% of those providing this information had no actual data upon which to make this determination and relied only on their personal perception of the situation.
- Respondents thought that the most prevalent reason FWS-awarded students did not take FWS jobs was that they made more money in other positions.
- Only 3% of financial aid staff thought that all of their FWS-employed students were on track to earn 100% of their award, while 21% thought that fewer than half were on track to receive their full award.
- Less than one quarter (21%) of survey respondents thought that their school was “very effective” in helping FWS students in meeting their postsecondary education costs.
- Less than one fifth (19%) of survey respondents thought their school was “very effective” in helping FWS students find FWS positions that complemented their educational goals or career goals.
- Only 10% of respondents thought their school's FWS program was “very innovative.”
- Twenty-three percent reported that finding other sources for students once FWS money ran out was “very difficult.”
- Only 6% of respondents told us their financial aid office (FAO) collects data on the connection between FWS and retention. Fewer than half (38%) reported such data was collected in other offices.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SURVEY FINDINGS, BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR

For each survey question, we examined differences among three sectors: community colleges, four-year private not-for-profit institutions, and four-year public institutions. We omitted the for-profit and graduate/professional schools as separate sectors because these categories had very few respondents, but we included their responses in the overall survey results. We found the following three differences the most striking:

- Respondents at community colleges were the least likely to report that their institution was embracing innovation with respect to FWS. They were also least likely to be collecting and using FWS-related data. When FWS students ran out of their allocated federal funds, respondents at community colleges were least likely to be able to find other funding for them to remain employed in that position.
- Respondents at four-year private not-for-profit institutions were the most likely to be collecting FWS data, although this was still a relatively low level. For instance, only 44% compiled basic data on award amounts. This sector was the most likely to believe that their FWS allotment was too low.
- Respondents at four-year public institutions were the most likely to report that their FWS program was “moderately” or “very” innovative, although this percentage was just 43%. They were also more likely to tell us that they had both on- and off-campus community service positions available.

While survey participants' responses demonstrated their interest in understanding and improving FWS programs and policies, we found that institutions lacked the innovation, communication, and data use needed to guide programmatic and policy-related change.

Based on the findings of this survey, we put forth the following recommendations to institutions participating in the FWS program, NASFAA, and ED:

Recommendations for Institutions

- #1: Identify ways that those working with FWS can be innovative in addressing the program's policies and procedures.
- #2: Have a staff position dedicated to implementing innovative FWS practices.
- #3: Examine best practices around student mentorship.
- #4: Build cross-campus relationships and leverage partnerships between entities with similar goals relating to FWS.
- #5: Streamline the FWS pipeline.

Recommendations for NASFAA and/or the U.S. Department of Education

- #6: Increase the capability of institutions to gather, examine, share, and utilize data relevant to FWS practices.
- #7: Look for ways to help institutions increase their effectiveness in assisting FWS students to meet their educational or career goals.
- #8: Implement a national FWS student survey.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, nearly 700,000 postsecondary students work part-time jobs through the FWS Program, earning a combined total of more than \$1 billion annually toward their college costs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Beyond FWS, states and institutions also offer non-federal work-study programs employing even more students. Research shows that students who participate in work-study with a reasonable number of part-time work hours not only benefit from the additional financial support, but also are more likely to complete their academic program (Hossler, Ziskin, Cedrik & Gross, 2008), and have improved employment outcomes after graduation (Scott-Clayton & Minaya, 2014).

NASFAA aims to improve the understanding, delivery, and effectiveness of FWS in U.S. colleges and universities. In conjunction with Public Agenda, NASFAA created and sent surveys to individuals at postsecondary institutions working in the financial aid office and other offices involved with the FWS program. This survey gathered qualitative information on effective practices, levels of innovation, data use, and challenges involved in administering the FWS program. We used the 1,885 usable survey responses to develop eight recommendations, described at the end of this report, for institutions, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), and NASFAA itself.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

NASFAA and Public Agenda developed two questionnaires, one for people working in financial aid offices (FAO) and another for people working in college and university offices other than financial aid (non-FAO). Everyone surveyed worked in postsecondary institutions in the United States. The two questionnaires were identical except that the version for FAOs included additional questions not found in the non-FAO version.

We identified potential respondents using several sources. One source was a list of 3,381 people known to work in FAOs who were members of either NASFAA or the National Student Employment Association (NSEA). These people received an email request to take the FAO survey. We contacted a total of 3,331 people from this list (50 emails bounced back).

We also purchased from Agile Education Marketing a list of the names and emails of 24,870 staff members at postsecondary institutions with job categories such as "Admissions — Financial Aid — Director" and "Admissions — Financial Aid — Staff." We invited the people on this list to take the non-FAO version of the questionnaire. Of these requests, 2,071 emails bounced back, resulting in a total of 22,799 requests delivered.

We sent a request to take the non-FAO version of the survey to an additional 354 NSEA contacts who do not work in FAOs. With just two bounce backs, 352 people received this invitation.

Respondents from these lists were considered “known respondents,” and had existing data (e.g., name, title, institution, etc.) pre-populated in the survey response database. A total of 26,482 individuals received a direct request from NASFAA to complete a survey.

We also asked these individuals to forward the participation request to others at their institution whom they thought would be appropriate to take the survey. If the survey request was forwarded, the people receiving the forward were asked to use a separate link that identified them as “anonymous” respondents. That way, these additional respondents would not be misidentified as the pre-populated known respondent who received the direct email request. Those who were not in our email list, and thus not identified, are referred to in this work as “anonymous” participants.

We emailed requests to take the survey on January 19, 2016. A week later, we sent one reminder to non-respondents.

We received 1,157 responses to the FAO version of the survey and 886 responses to the non-FAO version. We cleaned the data by eliminating respondents in “preview” mode (i.e., test cases, not actual respondents) and those who indicated that their institution did not participate in the FWS program. In addition, we identified several duplicate responses by comparing fields for name, institution, and email address. In the case of duplicate responses, we kept only the first response and deleted the others.

Despite the fact that we asked people working in FAOs to take the FAO version of the survey and gave them a link to that version, some took the non-FAO survey. An examination of “anonymous” responses to the non-FAO version indicated a number of write-in titles clearly related to financial aid, such as “Director of Financial Aid.” By using department and title information, we coded 173 non-FAO survey respondents as FAO respondents.

The final database included 1,885 respondents: 1,207 individuals in financial aid positions (64% of respondents) and 678 individuals working in other departments (36% of respondents). Because we cannot identify how many survey requests were forwarded to others, it is not possible to calculate a response rate for this survey.

In order to make comparisons across sectors, we created an additional variable using combined information from NASFAA records, federal data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and survey responses. Of the five sectors we examined — community colleges, four-year private not-for-profit institutions, four-year public institutions, for-profit institutions, and professional and graduate

institutions — we omitted the for-profit and graduate/professional schools as separate sectors because each category had very few respondents. This left 442 individuals at community colleges, 493 individuals at four-year public colleges and universities, and 759 individuals at four-year private not-for-profit colleges and universities. The margin of error is approximately +/- 2.2% for the full sample at 95% confidence. For the sector subgroups, the margin is +/- 4.6% for the community college sector; +/- 3.5% for the four-year private not-for-profit¹ institution sector; and +/- 4.4% for the four-year public institution sector².

QUALIFICATIONS

It is important to interpret these survey results as responses by individuals and not as if each response represents a separate institution. This is because, in many cases, there are multiple respondents from the same institution in the database. The following example illustrates the difference: It would be accurate to say “11 of the respondents to the survey told us that their institution did not participate in FWS.” It would not be accurate to interpret a response as “11 of the schools in this study did not participate in FWS,” since more than one person from the same institution could respond to the survey.

We designed the seven open-ended questions in the survey to gain additional information about specific closed-ended questions. These open-ended questions usually asked individuals why they responded the way they did to the previous question. In many cases, respondents elaborated so much that a full treatment of the responses would be prohibitive in this report. For example, after question 1.31, which asked if the respondent thought the school’s FWS program was helping students meet their postsecondary costs, we asked respondents to explain their answer. The subsequent comments ran over 40,000 words. Printed out, the comments were 77 pages long, approximately the length of a short novel. For the sake of this report, we have limited the scope of the qualitative comment treatment to comments with the most informative answers that fit the objectives of the survey. Thus, for question 1.32 (the follow up to the above referenced 1.31), we treat only the responses from those answering “very effective” when rating their school’s ability to help students meet their postsecondary costs. This filtered the qualitative data to approximately 7,000 words.

Our survey instrument is available upon request by emailing Research@nasfaa.org.

¹ We refer to this sector as four-year private, omitting the “not-for-profit” modifier for the sake of brevity.

² This assumes a total population size of 26,482, which is the number of people who received the request to take the survey.

OVERALL RESULTS

OFFICE FUNCTIONS

The first section of the survey asked respondents which offices in the institution performed specific FWS functions. Results indicate that most institutions did not centralize FWS activities in one office, but rather spread them among different offices.

Management of FWS Expenditures/Fund Usage: This was the FWS activity most often performed by a financial aid office (FAO), according to 91% of respondents. In the rare exceptions where this function was not situated in the FAO, it was in the bursar/business/accounting office (2% of respondents) or in payroll (1%).

Data Collection: Approximately two thirds (67%) of respondents reported that the FAO collected data on FWS recipients. Other offices performing this function were the student employment/hiring/placement office (reported by 4%), the institutional research office (also reported by 4%), and human resources (also reported by 4%). Six percent reported that the FAO did not collect data on FWS recipients and did not know if any other offices collected it either.

Coordination of FWS Community Service and/or Job Location and Development Programs (JLD): Many respondents (61%) reported that their FAO coordinated their FWS community service and/or JLD programs. In the write-in section, many respondents reported that if the FAO did not perform this function, a community service position at the institution handled it. Additional areas included student employment (11%), and human resources (3%). Six percent did not know if another office coordinated this function.

Advertisement of FWS Positions: The FAO advertised positions, according to 60% of respondents. Among the rest, the student employment office performed this function (11%) or human resources did (5%).

Hiring and Placing Students in FWS Positions: Fifty-five percent of respondents reported hiring and placement as within the purview of the FAO. Among the remaining respondents, 13% reported that student employment hired and placed students, and 8% reported it as the role of human resources.

Managing FWS Payroll: Only 40% of survey respondents reported this as an FAO function. Almost as many respondents (36%) reported that their payroll department performed this function. Ten percent reported that managing FWS payroll was done by human resources, 8% by student employment, and 6% by the bursar.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS³

Employment of Students Awarded FWS

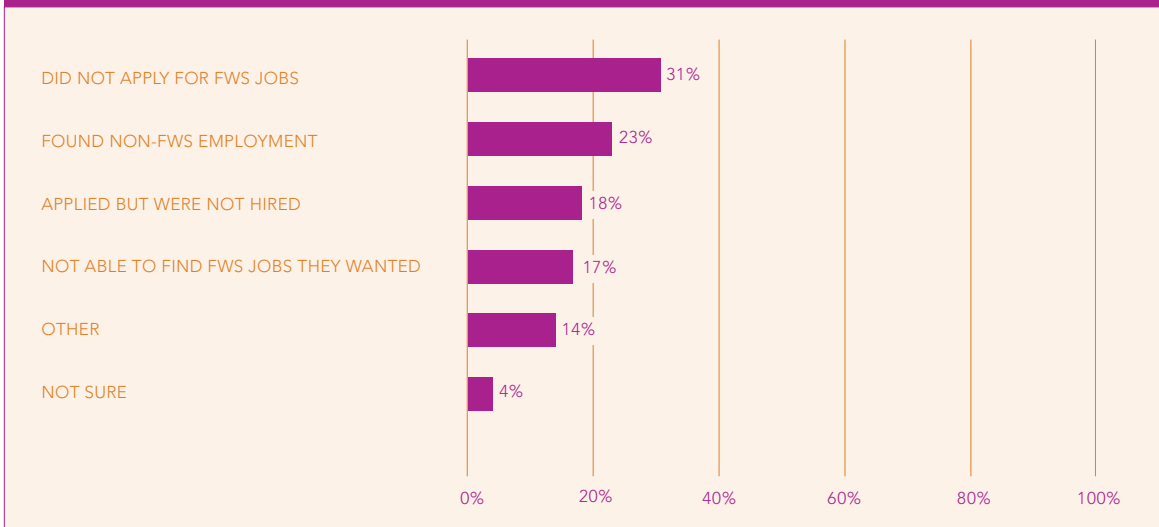
The first question on program effectiveness asked about undergraduates who had been awarded FWS in 2014–15 — specifically, what percentage had actually been employed in a FWS position. One in three respondents (33%) working in FAOs at their institution told us that less than 50% of undergraduates who had been awarded FWS were actually employed in a FWS position in the last year. Only 11% reported that all of their FWS-eligible students had been employed in a FWS position. An additional 11% reported that this figure was between 90% and 99%. Thirteen percent did not know the answer to this question. However, it's important to note that about one third (31%) of the respondents to this question had no actual data upon which to make this determination and relied instead upon their perception of the situation.

The survey also asked respondents why they thought students awarded FWS in 2014–15 did not work a FWS job (see Figure 1). Thirty-one percent responded that these students did not apply for FWS jobs. Twenty-three percent stated that these students found other employment that was not FWS. Eighteen percent said that these students applied for FWS jobs but were not hired. Seventeen percent said they thought students were unable to find the type of FWS job they wanted.

When asked how they determined their answers in this question, 41% of the respondents said they had no actual data upon which to base their determination and had answered according to their personal perceptions of the situation.

³ We only asked these questions of the FAO staff and did not ask them on the non-FAO survey. Thus, in addition to this being a subset of the surveyed personnel, these results do not include the 173 FAO staff who mistakenly took the non-FAO survey.

FIGURE 1. REASONS FWS-AWARDED STUDENTS MIGHT NOT TAKE A FWS POSITION, AS PERCEIVED BY FWS PROGRAM STAFF



We asked our FAO respondents what percentage of students employed in FWS positions in 2014–15 they thought were on track to earn 100% their FWS award. Only 3% thought all of their students were on track, and only 9% thought that between 90% to 99% were on track to receive their entire award. Approximately one in five (21%) thought less than half were on track to earn their full award. Fourteen percent did not know how to answer the question, and 42% had no familiarity with the data needed to answer this question.

We asked FAO staff why students might take non-FWS positions (see Table 1). The reason they gave most often was to make more money, and keeping a previous non-FWS position closely followed. Respondents did not see scheduling issues having much influence.

Satisfaction Levels of FWS Employers and Employees

When examining student satisfaction with FWS jobs, 69% of responding FAO staff reported that “most [students] are satisfied.” An additional 18% reported “some [students] are satisfied.” Again, most respondents based these answers on

perceptions rather than data. Only a third (33%) told us that they had data available to make this determination, meaning that 67% had no data to answer the question and instead were relying on personal perceptions.

The flip side of FWS employment satisfaction is the satisfaction of employers with their FWS students. Approximately three-quarters (78%) of responding financial aid staff believed that most employers were satisfied with their FWS student employees. Most don’t know that for sure, however; 57% of respondents based this determination on their personal perception of the situation, rather than actual employer satisfaction data.

Clearly, many responding staff members rely on their perceptions of key aspects of the FWS experience to determine the success of the program, rather than using data from students and employers. The voices of those groups remain unheard. In addition, a lack of data on FWS students and employers means basic information, such as the percentage of FWS positions being filled, is not well understood.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY OF REASONS STUDENTS TAKE OTHER NON-WORK-STUDY POSITIONS, ACCORDING TO FAO PERCEPTIONS

	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	NOT AT ALL	UNSURE
To make more money	30%	48%	3%	19%
They already had a non-FWS job so they kept it	26%	43%	4%	26%
To get more job experience	11%	46%	7%	35%
Non-FWS is more convenient or has better scheduling	8%	28%	26%	38%

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Effectiveness in Meeting Students' Needs

We asked respondents about the effectiveness of their school's FWS program on two key student outcomes (see Table 2). Only about one in five (21%) believed that their FWS program was "very effective" in helping students meet their postsecondary educational costs. Most thought that their school was only "moderately effective" (41%). These findings were similar to those concerning students locating FWS jobs that complemented their educational programs or career goals.

In both cases, we also asked respondents to comment on why they rated their program this way. A key indicator among those who rated their school's program "very effective" with respect to meeting postsecondary costs was if students told them they were able to have a schedule that worked around their coursework. A number of respondents also told us that

they perceived that students on FWS felt that the FWS job improved their financial ability to attend school. A smaller number of respondents referenced the job skills learned in the FWS position.

We saw several patterns emerge in the comments of those respondents who rated their school as very effective in helping students find FWS jobs that complement their educational programs or career goals. Many respondents told us that their school makes an effort to match students with jobs in their major field of study. This may result from an emphasis on certain knowledge or skills in the posted job descriptions. It may also result from departments specifying that they want to interview students from particular majors and/or only hire students from specific majors. Some respondents told us that their career services office was very active in placement and tried to match students with positions that fit their career interests.

TABLE 2. "HOW EFFECTIVE DO YOU THINK YOUR SCHOOL'S FWS PROGRAM IS IN HELPING STUDENTS TO..."

	VERY EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL
...meet their postsecondary educational costs?	21%	41%	32%	5%
...find FWS jobs that complement their educational programs or career goals?	19%	39%	35%	7%

Innovation

We asked respondents to tell us how innovative they thought their institution was with respect to their FWS program. Only 10% reported "very innovative," while 29% reported "moderately innovative" and 35% "somewhat innovative." Approximately one in four (26%) reported that their FWS program was "not innovative at all."

We then used open-ended questions to ask respondents to elaborate on that response and also to describe any innovative FWS practices or policies they might have. An initial summary of these responses indicates two key aspects to innovation: having a dedicated staff position to implement innovative practices and leveraging partnerships with other offices on or off campus.

In an effort to capture more information about innovation, we asked respondents about innovative FWS practices or policies that they wanted to try or develop. A common theme throughout many of these responses was the idea of incorporating mentorship into FWS positions. In many cases, respondents envisioned the FWS student acting as a mentor, either to younger children in the community

through community service positions, or on campus to incoming students through something like a "first-year-experience" program. In other cases, participants wanted to see mentorship of the FWS student. These respondents wanted more active mentor/mentee roles between students and their employers.

Many of the other innovative ideas discussed involved expanding the roles of FWS students in the community, either through community service or area businesses. One respondent noted that transportation can be a barrier to off-campus jobs and recommended a funded travel program. Another respondent suggested increasing the percentage of the FWS salary paid by the institution to extend FWS funds across more students.

Job Descriptions

Federal regulations require institutions to have job descriptions for all FWS positions and 88% of respondents reported they did. In the qualitative responses relating to having job descriptions, most who did not answer "yes" said they were not sure if all departments had job descriptions. Some respondents reported that, in some cases, job descriptions

were out of date or not very thorough. For institutions that indicated they did not have job descriptions, it is possible that those descriptions were maintained within a different office on campus and the respondents were unaware of the descriptions. Most often, the department employing the student (76%) or an off-campus employer (24%) wrote the job descriptions. Eleven percent reported that the student employment office wrote job descriptions, and 9% reported that human resources did so.⁴

Pain Points

The next section of the survey examined the “pain points” in administering FWS. Because perceptions of difficulties in administering FWS differed between FAOs and non-FAOs, we divided the results according to group (see Table 3). This grouping caused the numbers of respondents in each category, when broken out further by sector, to be too small to examine sector differences.

The most agreement around difficulty with FWS practices and policies related to finding other funding sources for students once FWS money ran out. Twenty-three percent of financial aid personnel found this “very difficult” and 15% found it “moderately difficult.” Next, financial aid personnel mentioned the reading/math tutor requirements for FWS positions, with 12% reporting this as “very difficult” and 14% as “moderately difficult.”

A number of the practices we asked about were not considered difficult by many FAO respondents. Table 3 shows four cases where 50% or more of respondents checked “not difficult”: finding eligible students to take FWS funds (64%); keeping FWS records as outlined in regulation (53%); drawing down funds from and reconciling FWS funds with the G5 system (51%); and finding nonfederal funds to fulfill the required nonfederal share of FWS wages (50%). Not surprisingly, these are also areas where only a very few respondents told us they had great difficulty.

In three areas in particular, FAO respondents reported that their institution was not performing certain activities. Managing off-campus agreements was not a part of any office’s FWS duties according to 16% of the FAO respondents. A similar percentage (16%) told us that their institution did not attempt to find nonfederal funds to fulfill

the required nonfederal share of FWS wages. Additionally, 15% reported that their institutional practices did not include the most prevalent “pain point”: finding other funding sources for students once FWS money ran out.

Comparing FAO and non-FAO responses to this question illustrates a pattern found across all items. In each case, non-FAO respondents were much more likely to be unaware of the difficulty of administering specific aspects of FWS. For example, although many FAOs reported finding other sources of money once FWS funds ran out to be a significant pain point, 28% of those not in financial aid positions did not know if this was a difficult issue at their institution. Taken as a whole, this indicates an opportunity to communicate about the difficulties of FWS administration across the institution. This could facilitate wider understanding and perhaps even motivate other offices to offer suggestions or assistance with such difficulties.

Responses to a survey question asking about the FWS allocation amount revealed another “pain point.” Approximately two thirds of respondents (65%) reported that their FWS allocation was “too little.” Only 31% thought their allocation was “just right,” and a distinct minority (4%) thought the allocation was “too much.”

Seven percent reported that they had received an audit or program review finding for their FWS program in any of the last five years. The survey asked those respondents to describe the finding and how they resolved it. While those with a finding described several different scenarios, two issues arose with more frequency: incomplete or non-existing job descriptions and irregularities between actual hours worked and hours recorded as worked. In both cases, the institutions responded by implementing procedures that would solve the problem. In the case of missing job descriptions, institutions implemented more rigorous systems for ensuring all jobs had descriptions. In the case of payroll issues, institutions either improved a system that had been in place or, in rare cases, educated employers about the importance of accurate time sheets. In a few cases of timesheet errors, the school resolved the issue by covering inaccurately recorded hours with departmental or institutional funds.

⁴ Responses sum to more than 100% because we encouraged respondents to mark as many responses as applied, recognizing that more than one office could be involved in writing job descriptions.

TABLE 3. "HOW DIFFICULT DO YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING ARE AT YOUR INSTITUTION?"

	RESPONDENT GROUP	VERY DIFFICULT	MODERATELY DIFFICULT	SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT	NOT DIFFICULT	WE DON'T DO THIS	DON'T KNOW
Finding other funding sources for students once FWS runs out	FAO	23%	15%	22%	20%	15%	5%
	Non-FAO	17%	20%	17%	11%	7%	28%
Meeting the reading/math tutor requirements for FWS positions	FAO	12%	14%	27%	48%	1%	2%
	Non-FAO	2%	6%	16%	28%	6%	42%
Ensuring students earn their full FWS award	FAO	8%	17%	31%	29%	11%	4%
	Non-FAO	2%	7%	24%	31%	5%	30%
Meeting the community service requirements for FWS positions	FAO	8%	13%	28%	48%	1%	2%
	Non-FAO	3%	7%	15%	28%	7%	40%
Monitoring FWS expenditures/fund usage	FAO	5%	16%	30%	46%	1%	2%
	Non-FAO	2%	13%	18%	37%	5%	25%
Monitoring payroll	FAO	5%	14%	26%	44%	5%	5%
	Non-FAO	2%	11%	20%	42%	5%	21%
Hiring, placing, and retaining students in FWS positions	FAO	5%	14%	33%	40%	6%	3%
	Non-FAO	4%	12%	26%	42%	3%	14%
Completing the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP)	FAO	5%	12%	27%	43%	2%	11%
	Non-FAO	1%	5%	10%	13%	10%	61%
Collecting and/or processing timesheets	FAO	5%	12%	29%	39%	9%	6%
	Non-FAO	2%	7%	21%	49%	3%	18%
Finding eligible students to take FWS funds	FAO	5%	11%	30%	43%	9%	5%
	Non-FAO	5%	8%	18%	52%	3%	15%
Finding FWS jobs for eligible students	FAO	5%	11%	19%	64%	1%	1%
	Non-FAO	4%	10%	28%	41%	3%	14%
Working with employers on campus and/or off campus	FAO	4%	10%	34%	43%	5%	5%
	Non-FAO	1%	8%	22%	37%	5%	27%
FWS recordkeeping as outlined in regulation	FAO	3%	9%	28%	53%	1%	5%
	Non-FAO	1%	4%	12%	24%	7%	52%
Managing off-campus agreements	FAO	3%	9%	26%	36%	16%	10%
	Non-FAO	2%	4%	12%	23%	11%	48%
Finding nonfederal funds to fulfill the required nonfederal share of FWS wages	FAO	3%	6%	15%	50%	16%	10%
	Non-FAO	4%	5%	12%	22%	10%	47%
Training/preparing FWS student employees	FAO	2%	11%	30%	43%	9%	5%
	Non-FAO	2%	10%	24%	45%	4%	14%
Drawing down funds from and reconciling FWS funds with the G5 system	FAO	1%	2%	10%	51%	11%	25%
	Non-FAO	1%	3%	4%	19%	10%	64%

AWARDING PRACTICES

A majority of respondents (57%) reported that they did not use a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filing priority date to award FWS funds. Forty-two percent of respondents reported setting a maximum award amount and 18% reported setting a minimum amount.

We asked respondents what they typically did if a student exhausted the FWS funds before the award period ended. Thirty-two percent told us they would continue to employ the student with institutional or departmental funds. Almost one in four (23%) reported they would release the student from employment until they could secure more FWS funds. A small percentage (5%) would provide additional loan funds (either Title IV or non-Title IV), depending on the student's eligibility. Many (91%) told us that they had safeguards in place to alert them in the event that a student might exhaust the award amount before the award period ended.

FWS students might become ineligible to receive FWS funds if they are not making satisfactory academic progress. In this case, 32% of respondents would release the student from employment until FWS funds could be secured again. About one quarter (23%) would continue to employ the student, but would pay with institutional or departmental funds. As with students who exhaust their FWS awards, only a small percentage (4%) would try to provide additional loan funds for these students (either Title IV or non-Title IV), depending on the student's eligibility.

The survey also asked if the institution allowed students to earn FWS wages for the next period of enrollment during periods of nonattendance. Eight percent of respondents "always" did this, 14% did so "most of the time," 35% did so "sometimes," and 42% reported "not at all."

In terms of the types of students attending their institutions, 63% reported that they had graduate students. About one quarter of those respondents (26%) awarded FWS to eligible graduate students and 17% would only award FWS if the graduate student requested funds from the FWS awarding office.

Almost half (49%) reported that some students at their institution attended exclusively online; more than half of those respondents (57%) said their institution did not award those students FWS.

ADVERTISING POSITIONS

A good number of respondents (41%) reported that their school used an online student portal to advertise available FWS positions. That was followed by using email (21%), using bulletin boards on campus (19%), and using social media (10%). Only 4% used a student newspaper to advertise.

The largest percentage of respondents (44%) thought their schools' advertising efforts were only "moderately effective." One third (33%) thought they were "very effective." The remainder thought such efforts were either "somewhat effective" (21%) or "not effective at all" (2%).

The survey prompted respondents to explain why they rated their school as effective or not effective with respect to advertising FWS positions. Most told us they were very effective because they filled all of their FWS positions quickly. A few mentioned what advertising process they thought led to a rating of very effective, with almost all of those attributing success to an online student portal that offers information about available FWS positions. A few used social media to alert students to FWS positions.

We then asked respondents to tell us about any innovative advertising policies or techniques their school had. As in the previous question, respondents most often mentioned using an online student employment portal. Another innovative technique used was to hold a job fair, either for all student-employment options or only FWS positions.

DATA COLLECTION

We asked survey respondents to tell us about certain types of data that their institution might be collecting (see Table 4). Most respondents reported that their institution compiled information on the FWS award, such as average FWS award (61%), the rate at which students earn the full FWS award (49%), and the average amount of unearned awards (46%). They also reported that they collect data on the student recipients, such as parent/student income levels (58%) and student grade point average (GPA) (54%).

Fewer institutions reported that their institution asked about the work environment, either from the perspective of student satisfaction with the FWS job (32%) or employer evaluations (37%). Exit interviews, which could examine both the work environment and satisfaction with the FWS process and office, were rare, with only 26% reporting that their institution collected them. And while retention and graduation rates are important educational outcome variables, most respondents were either unsure of the availability of this data or reported that their institution did not collect it.

TABLE 4. "DOES YOUR SCHOOL COLLECT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DATA ON FWS RECIPIENTS?"

	YES, THE FAO COLLECTS THIS DATA	YES, OTHER OFFICES COLLECT THIS DATA	NO	NOT SURE
Average and/or median award amount	40%	21%	26%	13%
Parent and/or student income level	38%	20%	30%	13%
Rate at which students earn the full amount of the FWS award	30%	19%	36%	16%
Average amount of unearned FWS award	28%	18%	38%	16%
Grade point average	25%	29%	30%	16%
Employer evaluation results	14%	23%	42%	21%
Student job satisfaction	11%	21%	47%	20%
Exit interview results	9%	17%	51%	23%
Retention rate	6%	38%	36%	20%
Graduation rate	6%	38%	36%	20%

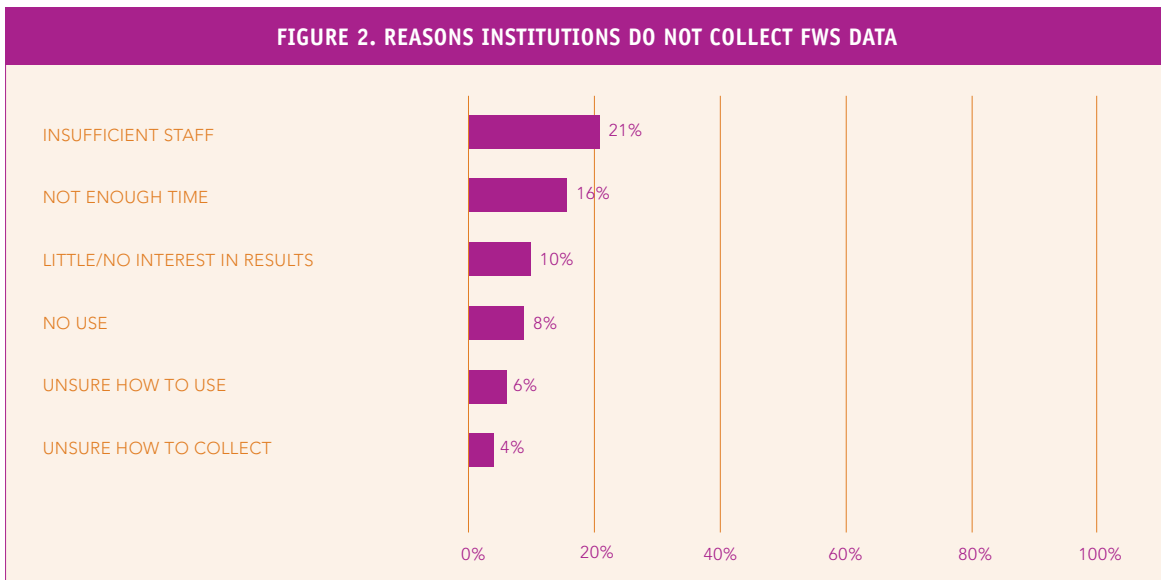
If a respondent told us that an office at their institution collected at least one source of data, we then asked how useful they found that data in understanding FWS issues. About one in five thought the data they collected was "very useful" (21%). A majority (56%) reported that the data was "somewhat useful," and a few (6%) reported it was not useful at all. Interestingly, although the respondents to this question had reported in the previous question that their institution collected data, 17% reported in this section that they did not use the data they collected.

We asked, if they were able to collect such data on FWS recipients, would the institution then use the information to determine future FWS awarding criteria. About a third

(32%) answered "yes," 20% answered "no," and most (48%) answered "unsure."

The survey then prompted those who checked "no" to any of the questions about data collection to data points to select from a list of possible reasons the institution did not collect such data. As shown in Figure 2, the two most common reasons given were "insufficient staff to collect such data" (21%) and "not enough time to collect such data" (16%). Ten percent told us that there was "little or no interest in what the results might be" and 8% checked "no use for such data." Relatively few respondents thought that not collecting FWS-related data was due to being unsure how to collect the data (4%) or how to use the data (6%).

FIGURE 2. REASONS INSTITUTIONS DO NOT COLLECT FWS DATA



HIRING AND PLACEMENT

About half of respondents (51%) reported that the FAO was the only office on campus that places FWS students. The other half (49%) reported that the FAO was not the only office to place FWS students. Almost two thirds of respondents (62%) reported that in addition to placing students into FWS positions, their office also placed students in non-FWS positions.

For respondents who replied that their office was not the only one that hired students in FWS positions, 77% told us that other offices beside their own hired both FWS and other students in positions, and 18% reported those other offices only hired FWS students. The takeaway from this seems to be that there are several avenues by which FWS students can be hired, so any recommended changes would need to work across multiple venues and departments.

A small percentage (5%) reported that other offices only hired students when using their own departmental or institutional funds. In the case where other offices hire students with institutional or departmental funds, 56% reported that they worked with the financial aid office to determine if the student would qualify for FWS. Sixteen percent did so “sometimes,” and 8% did not do so. A good portion, however, were “unsure” (20%).

One goal of the FWS program is to place students in positions that enhance their educational goals, assuming the students are able to articulate these goals. In such cases, 47% of survey respondents reported that they always considered educational goals when placing students in FWS positions, and 35% reported doing so sometimes. Eight percent rarely did so and 10% never did.

A large majority of respondents (79%) reported that their FWS students did not have the opportunity to earn academic credit as well as wages as part of their FWS job. The remaining respondents reported that their students had this opportunity “always” (6%) or “sometimes” (15%).

We also asked respondents about the physical location of their FWS positions and allowed them to choose as many options as applied. Most reported having on-campus positions (45%) or off-campus positions at non-profit agencies (28%). Only 2% reported placing students in off-campus for-profit companies.

PAYROLL

A majority of respondents (58%) told us that the institution paid FWS students every two weeks. A smaller number (15%) paid twice a month. About one quarter (23%) paid FWS students monthly. Only a rare few (2%) paid students weekly.

The majority of institutions with graduate students earning FWS reported paying these students on an hourly basis (71%); only 4% used a salary basis. The remaining quarter (25%) told us that being paid hourly or salaried depended on the position.

Most respondents (79%) told us that their school allowed students to use FWS wages to pay charges on the student's school account with the student's written authorization. Even more respondents (92%) reported that their school would pay the institutional portion of FWS funds in services and equipment, such as tuition, room, board, and books.

EXPENDITURES/FUND USAGE

The survey asked questions about expenditure and fund usage only to respondents answering the FAO survey⁵. This reduced the number of respondents, making it impossible to accurately determine sector differences. Most respondents (82%) reported that their school had not, in any of the last five years, returned unspent FWS funds to the U.S. Department of Education. For the 18% who had done so, 56% returned more than 10% of the allocated FWS funds. Further, of those returning more than 10% of the allocated FWS funds, 74% reported that the U.S. Department of Education reduced their future FWS allocation.

In any of the last five years, 64% of respondents reported that their institution carried FWS funds forward, 37% reported carrying funds back, and 61% reported transferring FWS funds to the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.

COMMUNITY SERVICE/JOB LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (JLD)

Seventy-six percent of survey respondents reported that their institution had met the community service requirement in the last five years, while 10% had not and 13% were unsure. Similarly, 77% said their institution had met the reading and/or math tutor requirement, while 7% reported not meeting it at least one year in five, and 16% reported they were “unsure.” Of those not meeting the reading and/or math tutoring requirement, 97% were not assessed any sort of penalty.

Only 7% of survey respondents reported receiving a community service requirement waiver in any of the last five years. Of those, 12% had done so once, 12% had done so for two years, 12% had done so for three years, 8% had done so for four years, and 56% had done so for all of the last five years. Almost half of those (49%) reported that it was “not difficult at all” to receive a community service requirement waiver, while 24% saw it as “somewhat difficult” and 22% as “moderately difficult.”

⁵ Because of the reduced number of respondents, we cannot accurately determine sector differences in this section.

Community service FWS positions can be physically located on or off campus. About half (52%) of respondents told us they had both on- and off-campus community service programs. One third (33%) only had such positions off campus, and even fewer (15%) only had community service FWS positions on campus.

Only 21% told us that their school participates in the Job Location and Development Program (JLD). Most of those replying “yes” participated in JLD on their own (72%), and 8% participated with other schools. Twenty percent were unsure if they participated in JLD with other schools.

RESULTS BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR

The following sections detail how survey results varied by institutional sector, and we have indicated where sector variations were not found for a particular sector. There was no notable variation across sectors in the following areas:

- Office Functions:
 - Advertising of FWS positions
- Program Effectiveness:
 - Number of eligible FWS students employed in FWS positions
 - Reliability of information
 - Reasons students awarded FWS in 2014–15 did not work a FWS job
 - Student satisfaction with FWS jobs and data to use when making this determination
 - FWS employment satisfaction
- Program Administration:
 - Effectiveness of the school in helping students meet their postsecondary education costs
 - Existence of job descriptions for FWS positions
 - Receipt of an audit or program review finding in the FWS program
- Awarding Practices:
 - Setting a maximum and minimum award amount
 - Setting up a safeguard to alert administrators when students might exhaust their award before the award period ends
 - Providing loans if a student becomes ineligible to receive FWS funds
- Data Collection: Reasons for not collecting data
- Hiring and Placement:
 - Number of offices hiring students with their own departmental or institutional funds
 - FWS students’ opportunity to earn academic credit as well as wages
- Payroll: Schools’ payment of the institutional portion of FWS funds in services and equipment
- Expenditures/fund usage: All data recorded
- Community Service/Job Location and Development:
 - Meeting the community service requirement
 - Length of time a school received a community service waiver

The following sections summarize selected results from individual sectors. We did not include sections in which responses from a sector did not have a significant variation; the results from the overall survey section should be referenced.

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS — RESULTS SUMMARY

Of the 1,885 survey respondents, 493 were employed by four-year public colleges or universities.

Office Functions

Many four-year public college respondents reported that their FAO performed FWS administrative functions such as managing FWS fund expenditures (94%), collecting FWS data (61%), and advertising FWS positions (58%).

Program Effectiveness

Almost two thirds of four-year public college respondents (67%) thought that their institution's FWS allotment amount was "too low." This was higher than responses from other institutional sectors.

Thirty-nine percent of four-year public college respondents working in FAOs reported that fewer than half of students who had been awarded FWS were actually employed in a FWS position. While 70% of these respondents reported using data to support this belief, 30% based this answer only on perceptions.

Thirty-one percent of four-year public college respondents also told us they believed the reason so many students with FWS were not employed in FWS positions was that the students did not apply for such positions; again, many of these respondents (41%) did not have any data to back up this perception.

Fourteen percent of four-year public college respondents believed that fewer than half of their FWS students were on track to receive their full award amount, although many four-year public institution respondents (41%) had no data to corroborate this perception. It is not surprising that only 19% of respondents from public 4-year institutions thought that their school's FWS program was "very effective" at helping students meet their postsecondary education costs.

Program Administration

Fewer than half of this sector's respondents (43%) believed that their school's FWS program was even "moderately innovative."

In looking at "pain points," 20% of respondents from four-year public institutions thought finding other funding for students once FWS funds ran out was "very difficult."

Data Collection

When asked about data collected on FWS issues, only 40% of respondents from four-year public institutions reported that their office compiled basic data on award amounts.

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE NOT-FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS — RESULTS SUMMARY

Of the 1,885 survey respondents, 759 worked for four-year private not-for-profit colleges or universities.

Office Functions

Many four-year private college respondents reported that the FAO performed FWS administrative functions such as managing FWS fund expenditures (86%), collecting FWS data (65%), and advertising FWS positions (56%).

Program Effectiveness

Fewer than half (40%) of the respondents from this sector believed their school's FWS program was even "moderately innovative."

In looking at "pain points," 21% of respondents from this sector thought that finding other funding for students once FWS funds ran out was "very difficult."

Almost three out of four (72%) of four-year, not-for-profit, private college respondents thought that their institution's FWS allotment amount was "too low." This was higher than the responses from other institutional sectors.

Program Administration

Twenty-eight percent of four-year private institution respondents working in FAOs reported that fewer than half of the students who had been awarded FWS were actually employed in a FWS position. As with the public institution sector, two out of three of those respondents reported using data to support this belief, while one in three based their answer only on perceptions rather than actual data.

Thirty-one percent of four-year private college respondents believed that the reason so many students were not employed in FWS positions was that they did not apply for such positions. Again, a good number of four-year private non-for-profit respondents (39%) who answered the question did not have any data to back up this perception.

Approximately one quarter of the four-year private college respondents (26%) believed that fewer than half of FWS students were on track to receive their full award amount at their institution. Once again, many (39%) of those respondents had no data to corroborate this perception. Thus it is not surprising that only 19% thought that their school's FWS program was "very effective" at helping students meet their post-secondary education costs.

Data Collection

Four-year private colleges were more likely than community colleges or four-year, public universities to be collecting data on FWS issues. Still, the relative percentage was low; just 44% of respondents from this sector reported that their office compiled basic data on award amounts.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES — RESULTS SUMMARY

Of the 1,885 survey respondents, 442 were employed by community colleges.

Office Functions

Many community college respondents reported that their FAOs performed FWS administrative functions such as managing FWS fund expenditures (95%), collecting FWS data (71%), and coordinating FWS community service and/or JLD programs (70%).

Program Effectiveness

Forty percent of community college respondents working in FAOs reported that fewer than half of the students who had been awarded FWS were actually employed in a FWS position. While two out of three of those respondents reported using data to support this belief, one in three based their answer only on perceptions rather than actual data.

Thirty-one percent of community college respondents also told us that they believed that the reason so many students with FWS were not employed in FWS positions was that the students did not apply for those positions. Again, a good number of community college respondents (48%) did not have any data to back up this perception.

Program Administration

Almost one in five community college respondents (19%) believed that fewer than half of FWS students were on track to receive their full award amount. Again, about half (48%) of those respondents had no data to corroborate this perception. Thus, it is not surprising that only 27% of community college respondents thought that their school's FWS program was "very effective" at helping students meet their postsecondary education costs. Fewer than half (32%) believed that their school's FWS program was even "moderately innovative."

Respondents from community colleges were more likely than others to find aspects of administering FWS "very difficult." Thirty percent of community college respondents — the largest percentage among the three sectors — believed finding other funding for students once FWS funds ran out was "very difficult."

Nearly two thirds of community college respondents (60%) thought that their institution's FWS allotment amount was "too low."

Data Collection

Community colleges were less likely than four-year private or public universities to be collecting data on FWS issues. Still, the relative percentage was low: just 36% of community college respondents reported that their office compiled basic data on award amounts compared to only 44% at four-year private schools and 40% at four-year public schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A primary takeaway from this project is that college and university employees who work with FWS care about the program and have a lot to say about how it functions. This is evidenced by the survey response rate alone: We anticipated 500 survey responses but we ended up with more than 2,000 and received a small novel's worth of responses in written comments. Clearly, people who take part in administering FWS want their opinions heard.

There do seem to be procedural challenges with the way FWS is implemented. Many people told us that less than half of their FWS-eligible students actually take FWS positions. This can be for various reasons, such as finding better paying non-FWS positions or keeping a job they already had. Much of the data on this is anecdotal. For those students who do take FWS positions, many do not earn their full allocation. Even with those conditions, however, there did not seem to be a glut of unused FWS monies. Most of those completing the survey told us they did not need to return unused FWS funds. Many also felt that their FWS allotments from the federal government were too small.

It stands to reason, then, that many institutions manage FWS in ways similar to admissions, where not everyone admitted will matriculate. Thus, in order to effectively manage FWS funds, the institution must project FWS participation levels and earning levels, which would seem to take a good deal of resources. If procedures were created to streamline the FWS pipeline, perhaps these resources could be used in other ways to improve the FWS experience. This could include finding ways to gauge student interest in accepting a FWS position early on in the process.

Unfortunately, we also found that many respondents had nothing on which to base their responses except their own opinions. Time after time, respondents told us they had no data they could use to answer our questions about the effectiveness of their FWS program. Are students satisfied with their FWS positions? Are employers satisfied with the FWS students they employ? Does FWS impact retention? Without data, the answers are solely based on subjective perceptions.

Without reliable information about program effectiveness, we are hobbled in our efforts to improve and innovate FWS. In order to make progress in improving FWS, goals, data collection, and utilization must be a priority. Because survey respondents told us that two of the major reasons they did not collect such data were lack of staff and time, this could be difficult to change without increased staff resources.

Most survey respondents reported very little innovation in their FWS programs and policies. When they reported innovation, it was mostly using fairly standard efforts such as online employment databases.

Thus, despite the interest in understanding and improving FWS programs and policies demonstrated in this survey, we found a lack of innovation, communication roadblocks, and a dearth of the data use necessary to guide programmatic and policy-related change. Given this mismatch, we see an opportunity for leadership at the institutional, association, and government levels and put forth the following recommendations:

Recommendations for Institutions

#1: Identify ways that those working in FWS can be innovative in addressing the program's policies and procedures.

This would likely involve training FWS staff in how to become more innovative in their thinking, as well as showing them how they can implement innovative policies and procedures within the confines of their work environment and federal regulations. Thus this recommendation would address two areas: how to be innovative in the college and university environment and how to adopt promising innovative practices that have been used at other institutions.

#2: Have a staff position dedicated to implementing innovative FWS practices.

Many respondents who said they had innovative FWS practices worked for institutions that had dedicated staff and resources to a specific innovative practice. Because it is not feasible for all schools to dedicate a separate position to FWS, NASFAA should conduct further research to create best practice toolkits emphasizing effective innovations that are easily scalable and applicable to various sectors.

#3: Examine best practices around student mentorship.

Many of the existing innovative programs had ties to mentorship. Mentorship can occur at several levels, with FWS students in community service/tutoring positions serving as mentors or FWS students themselves being mentored in their positions. Given the research findings about the powerful influences of mentorship (Kuh, 2008; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013), we feel this is a particularly important area of innovation to pursue.

#4: Build cross-campus relationships and leverage partnerships between entities with similar goals relating to FWS.

Offices handling FWS should work to leverage their cross-training and partnerships with other offices on campus. This may alleviate some of the burden they feel and allow them to focus on different parts of the program where they could innovate more. Working to leverage cross-training and partnerships should be done in a coordinated and consistent way from year to year.

#5: Streamline the FWS pipeline.

Schools should seek to reduce the disconnect between students receiving an offer of a FWS and actually finding, accepting, and successfully performing a FWS job. Schools can achieve this by communicating effectively about the opportunities available through FWS and changing the overall perception of these jobs at the institution.

An important opportunity for intervention occurs after students receive their FWS awards, since only approximately half of those students go on to take FWS positions. NASFAA could create a communication tool to help its members explain to their students the possibilities and benefits of a FWS position. On the institutional side, efforts can be made to increase the understanding of faculty and staff about what a FWS position can entail, with the objective of expanding the range of positions offered to FWS students.

Recommendations for NASFAA

#6: Increase the capability of institutions to gather, examine, share, and utilize data relevant to FWS practices.

Increasing institutional capacity in terms of data collection, reporting, and use is paramount. Examining data is key to understanding various aspects of the FWS program and identifying areas for improvement. Unfortunately, many institutions do not have ready access to relevant data relating to FWS implementation, and offices that need to share information do not always have the infrastructure to do so. A central portal for data on FWS students would be the most efficient and useful way to integrate disparate sources of information on FWS.

Though increasing staff resources would be the most expedient way to spark change, it seems practical in the current economic environment to recommend ways that this might be accomplished without additional resources. We believe data utilization could be increased through other means, such as training administrators involved with FWS on how to efficiently work with data and the tools that would facilitate data collection.

Another possible route for better data usage would be to increase the communication between the office on campus responsible for data use (often the institutional research office) and those working in FWS. Increased communication could result in partnerships and increased resource-sharing among relevant departments and simplify the data collection processes.

Finally, NASFAA could investigate creating a model FWS portal to be implemented on top of existing student information systems. The association could accomplish this by working with FWS administrators to define the necessary parameters and collaborating with student information system providers to incorporate their suggestions. NASFAA should give special attention to ensuring streamlined and efficient FWS data collection that would not increase the administrative burden already experienced by FAOs.

#7: Look for ways to help institutions increase their effectiveness in assisting FWS students to meet their educational and career goals.

Again, we see this as a data issue, as many institutions have no data on how their efforts to match student goals and employer offerings have turned out. Institutions that were successful in this area administered surveys to students and employers, and also held exit interviews. NASFAA can facilitate this process by offering a centralized service that provides access to such tools, as well as the accompanying reporting and benchmarking.

Recommendation for NASFAA and/or the U.S. Department of Education

#8: Implement a national FWS student survey.

This survey of college and university administrators uncovered important patterns in terms of institutional practices concerning FWS. However, our study only provides institutional perspectives; what is missing is the student experience. What gains do students perceive as connected to their FWS experience? How do these differ from the gains perceived by students employed in non-FWS jobs? What aspects of the FWS program do students feel are limiting? Do they think FWS helped them to reach their academic or career goals, and if so, in what way? Such key issues must be taken into account, but the real issues can only be learned from the students themselves. This survey could be administered by NASFAA or ED, since they receive fiscal information and recipient data for the federal campus-based programs. If conducted by ED, this may require lifting the Student Unit Record ban that is currently in place.

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