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## Making it Work: Reframing College Student Off-Campus Employment as a High-Impact Practice

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## **Making it Work: Reframing College Student Off-Campus Employment as a High-Impact Practice**

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### **Abstract**

Working while attending college has become a reality of the student experience, especially for low-income, adult, and BIPOC students. Particularly, off-campus employment is commonplace but may not be fully understood by higher education professionals as an educationally effective activity. This paper is grounded in current literature on the necessity and the benefits of off-campus employment, along with the need for high-impact practices. We, the authors, encourage institutions to reframe off-campus employment as an activity that is educationally effective for those students who engage in it.

*Keywords:* college student employment, off-campus employment, high-impact practices

Moving through the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, U.S. higher education institutions and their students are rapidly changing due to political, social, and demographic shifts. Despite popular belief among the public and some higher education leaders, almost gone are the right-out-of-high school graduates seeking admission to a 4-year institution, who live on or by campus, and who have plenty of money to spare (Dedman, 2018). Rather, many of today's college students attend part-time or community colleges, are older than 25, and are financially

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independent (Dedman, 2018). In addition, only 13% of all U.S. college students live on campus and nearly two-thirds of all students work to earn money (Eismeier, 2018).

Because some college educators who make policy, curricular, or co-curricular decisions understand that many of today's college students must work, they have begun to articulate how employment plays into students' engagement in educationally-effective activities. *High impact practices* (HIPs; Kuh, 2008) are those which create better pathways towards student success and typically include first-year seminars, learning communities, study abroad, undergraduate research with faculty, or collaborative learning.

Postsecondary educators have just begun to address how campus-based student employment may feature as highly effective activities (McClellan et al., 2023). Much less attention has been given to whether off-campus work activities of college students could incorporate the features of HIPs, which is the main purpose of this paper. We, the authors, argue that student affairs and academic affairs practitioners should work toward implementing off-campus employment as a conversational, pedagogical, or experiential activity, and assess it as an effective outcome of students' engagement like study abroad, internships or co-ops, or service-learning activities (most of which take place off-campus as well). It should not matter to higher education leaders where students are engaged, but that they are participating in activities that engender their success and preparation for life after college.

### **Dilemmas in College Student Employment**

Spending considerable amounts of time working either on- or off-campus is a common aspect of today's college experience. The distribution of students who work is similar across institutional types, with 47% employment for full-time undergraduates at 2-year institutions and 38% at 4-year institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2022). Students working part-time are employed at much higher rates with 68% at 2-year institutions and 78% at 4-year institutions (NCES, 2022). Among Latinx and White full-time students, the percentage of those who work hovers between 42% and 43%, compared to 33% of African American students, about 28% of Asian American, and 21% of Native American students (NCES, 2022). The rates of employment are also not drastically different among students who identify within the gender binary, as 57% of women and 43% of men worked while in college in 2022 (NCES, 2022). Considering student age and work, NCES (2022) noted that the older full-time college students are, the more likely they spend time working.

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Over the years, researchers have investigated the potential impact of student employment and often reported on potentially negative implications. Students who work tend to achieve lower grades and are more prone to attrition (Callender, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2005; Remenick & Bergman, 2021; Wenz & Yu, 2010). The highest risk here is for low-income college students, perhaps because of work covering their and their families' financial needs. Researchers mostly agree that the ideal number of hours college students should spend working per week amounts to about 15. Students who work more than 15 hours per week tend to earn C grade point averages or below; 15 hours or fewer tend to translate into Bs or above (Carnevale & Smith, 2018). Hours worked are connected to persistence rates in similar ways: institutions show higher student retention rates for those students who work between 10 and 15 hours a week, compared to students who work more than 15 hours (Perna, 2023).

Considering these data, it is important that most existing studies are correlational, not causal. As Pike et al. (2008) suggested, the correlation between hours worked and reduced student scholastic achievement may be overblown: "Despite the fact that many in higher education believe that working for pay hinders student success, research has failed to find a consistent relationship between work and grades" (as cited in Martinez et al., 2012, p. 34). This is important given the potential for colleges and universities to consider policy or curricular decisions around student work-retention correlations. To provide the most effective solutions, higher education professionals must consider additional factors at play when trying to understand how work fits into the student experience. Two examples of these factors include illuminating why college students work and exploring the benefits of working while in college.

**Why College Students Work**

College educators may misunderstand who today's college students are. More than two-fifths are older than 25, more than a quarter of them are parents, 36% of them attended a community college, and 39% attended their institution part-time (Carnevale & Smith, 2018). Well more than half of all college students are financially independent and 42% of them may live on the brink of or in poverty. In 2007, about 45% of full-time and 80% of part-time traditionally aged students worked while enrolled in higher education institutions (Perna, 2023). By 2018, these numbers had not changed drastically and the rate of students who worked about 35 hours per week has steadily remained at about 10% since 2000 (NCES, 2022). However, during that same decade, average tuition rates increased by 37% nationally, and by more than 60% in 40

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U.S. states (Fredman, 2019), suggesting that the same hours worked in 2018 did not nearly buy the same tuition as in 2008. Rates of college student employment have stayed stable over the past two decades, solidifying the notion that work has become a consistent part of the student experience.

Educators in favor of students working fewer hours may assume students who are struggling have the option of choosing to work and may fail to recognize that many low-income students must work to make ends meet for themselves and their families (Carnevale & Smith, 2018). Thus, it potentially further marginalizes already disadvantaged students to propose they stop or reduce work to improve their academic achievement. Additionally, educators who suggest students move their off-campus work to on campus may not understand the year-round ability to earn money off-campus work provides compared to the reduced opportunities for employment on campus (Perna, 2023).

Reasons why students work include paying for living and educational expenses, meeting family obligations, developing career skills, reinforcing academic skills, having fun, or maintaining their lifestyle (Douglas & Attewell, 2019). Higher-income students tend to have the privilege to connect their work to long-term professional and personal goals, while lower-income students often work to put food on their own or their family's table (Carnevale & Smith, 2018; Martinez et al., 2012). Carnevale and Smith (2018) noted that lower-income college student workers tended to be more often Black, Latinx, or women who typically engaged in work full-time more often (26%) than their higher-income peers (22%).

Faculty, staff, and administrators of U.S. institutions must realize that for large swaths of students, work and college may be entirely inseparable. College will simply not happen without work and research has shown that there may be a lack of historic and current understanding of the experiences of low-income and adult students on our college campuses. College is also clearly not the only important activity in the lives of many students; in fact, for many of them it may be of secondary or tertiary significance, typically behind family obligations and earning money (Carnevale & Smith, 2018). As a result, we argue to begin including off-campus work as educationally effective experiences for college students.

### **Benefits of Employment**

What may not register with the public or college educators who take on the deficit perspective of work equals lack of success, is that being employed while in college provides

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various benefits for students. Researchers have examined the connection between working while in college and the learning process and found that no effect on the cognition of students who were working existed (Pascarella et al., 1998). That is, working does not inherently distract students from being academically successful. Similarly, another study noted that though working led to students being engaged less with peers and faculty, no difference in their learning was evident (Lundberg, 2004). More recently, McCormick et al. (2023) highlighted positive relationships between students who work and campus engagement, contradicting the prevailing notion that working students are less engaged. Studies like these established that employment may not be inherently detrimental to student success, paving the way for more complex conversations and approaches toward work.

From an employability standpoint, obtaining job experience prepares students for securing employment after college. In some cases, students may prefer off-campus employment over internship experiences, especially if the off-campus job is connected to the student's desired career path (Gault et al., 2018). Scholars are also certain that employment during the undergraduate years may provide higher earnings after college (Douglas & Attewell, 2019). This finding held true even when controlling for students' demographic and academic achievement characteristics. It may be the case that working months or years during college has a direct effect on what employers may require in prior experience for positions, and those students who have amassed direct work experience during college may be in line for higher salaries after college (Douglas & Attewell, 2019).

Working while in college also contributes to skill development of graduates in areas employers typically lament that students lack (Coates, 2015; Hart Research Associates, 2015; Stewart et al., 2016). One study found that even students who took courses designed to enhance their transferable skills still did not meet the expectations of the employers (Clokie & Fourie, 2016). In this case, learning from the classroom alone did not fully develop the skills necessary to enter the workforce, demonstrating the need for students to gain additional experiences outside of the classroom to apply their knowledge. One skill that working off-campus has positively influenced is interactions with diverse others (Rossmann & Trolan, 2020). Employers increasingly desire candidates who demonstrate openness to diversity (Watson & McConnell, 2018) and students who work off-campus may be more likely to interact with diverse others

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outside of the typically more homogenous campus environment, specifically at predominantly White institutions (PWI).

Off-campus employment has positive outcomes for students; however, the effects may depend on individual characteristics and institutional recognition and support. In one study, when examining dropout rates, paid work was associated with increased dropout intentions but only if effective institutional recognition and support was lacking (Coates, 2015). Coates (2015) argued that students participating in moderate amounts of paid work gained a variety of skills that would help them prepare for employment after graduation. Respondents also reported higher levels of active learning, interactions with academic staff, engagement with educationally purposeful activities, and work-integrated learning (Coates, 2015). This study is important in demonstrating an alternative, more complex view of factors surrounding off-campus student employment. It not only identifies the variety of benefits of student employment, but also acknowledges how potential consequences, such as increased drop-out intentions, can be mitigated through institutional support. This paper provides an example of how to reconceptualize off-campus employment, arguing how it should be viewed as an asset to the student experience. As a result, institutional stakeholders should embrace off-campus work as highly effective, draw out positive outcomes, and help students make connections between their employment and their studies.

### **High-Impact Practices**

Given that many college students must work and considering the variety of potential benefits for students to work, reframing attitudes about student employment is necessary in creating pathways for success. A way to begin this reframing is through the lens of high-impact practices (HIPs), curricular or co-curricular experiences that provide enriching educational opportunities. Through data collected by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), these experiences are considered high-impact because of their connection to a wide range of positive student outcomes such as enhanced problem-solving skills, improved critical thinking, openness to new perspectives and ideas, and development of ethics and values (Kuh, 2008). Kuh (2008) initially named 10 HIPs that are particularly effective in providing valuable experiences to spur student learning and development, including first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning or study abroad, service learning, internships, as well as capstone courses and projects.

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The extant literature describing educationally-effective practices is sizeable. Most important within these works are explanations of the effectiveness of community- and service-based learning (Anderson et al., 2019; Painter & Howell, 2020; Pascale & Ohlson, 2020; Taylor et al., 2019), global education or study abroad (Coyer et al., 2019), and internships (Sauder et al., 2019; Sonti et al., 2016) on student outcomes. All these activities have in common that they take place off campus, often under the direction of non-institutional or non-instructional personnel who oversee the pedagogical or experiential curricula or modalities.

**Institutional Desire for More HIPs**

HIPs have become an integral part of institutions of higher education and many colleges and universities are striving to increase the number of students who participate in HIPs. When reviewing data on HIP participation, we find that the level of involvement varies by different student demographic characteristics and that some students are participating less frequently than others. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2021) measured nationwide college student participation in HIPs. The first data summary included percentages of participation for first-year students and seniors. First-year students' rates showed participation in learning communities, service learning, and research with faculty. Beyond these HIPs, NSSE (2021) also showed seniors' participation in internships or field experiences, study abroad, and a culminating senior experience. A second data set showed the overall numbers of HIPs in which first-year students and seniors were involved. For the purposes of the current paper, the second NSSE data set is more instructive.

Analyzing overall participation rates, we note that 59% of first-year students and 85% of seniors participated in at least one HIP (NSSE, 2021). Of the 59%, 47% of first year students participated in only one HIP, while the remaining 12% participated in two or more HIPs. As students move into their senior year, a shift occurs not only with an increase in overall participation but also with an increase in the number of HIPs each student participates in. Of the 85% of seniors participating in at least one HIP, 24% only participated in one while 61% participated in two or more (NSSE, 2021).

Senior student participation rates in at least two HIPs disaggregated by race, age, first-generation status, and on- or off-campus residence are specifically applicable to the current paper. These are the demographic characteristics that most often feature in the discussion of which college students work on- or off-campus and for what reasons. White seniors out-



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participated their Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) peers by between 4 and 8 percentage points. Traditionally-aged seniors (younger than 25 years of age) out-participated adult students (older than 25) by 30 percentage points (73% to 43%). Continuing-generation college seniors out-participated their first-generation peers by 13 percentage points (68% to 55%). Finally, on-campus resident seniors out-participated their off-campus resident counterparts by 20 percentage points (79% to 59%). We have no information whether these data are based on statistically significant differences between the groups; however, the numeric difference in some of the participation rates give reason for concern that White, continuing-education, traditionally-aged, on-campus seniors either have more opportunity or more access to participating in at least two HIPs. Their first-generation, BIPOC, adult student, or off-campus peers may have disadvantage regarding similar opportunities.

As fewer of today's U.S. higher education institutions enroll primarily 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates and as nearly 4/5ths of all college students live in off-campus residences (Blagg & Rosenboom, 2017) college educators must find ways to engage students in more off-campus opportunities. HIPs offered in traditional co-curricular modalities (e.g., undergraduate research, study abroad) may exclude large groups of college students who may not have the time or the privilege to return to campus for activities beyond attending their scheduled courses. An even bigger dilemma may exist when students who live off campus may not be able to return to campus for co-curricular HIPs because they must work an off-campus job. If institutions cannot find ways to include the off-campus employment experience in the way they conceptualize or define HIPs, they may miss a critical chance to engage students where they are in a holistic fashion.

### **Flexibility of HIPs**

A way to involve more students in HIPs may be through identifying activities in which students are already engaged that also provide an opportunity for deeper learning. Kuh (2008), along with other scholars, identified that it is not enough for students to simply participate in HIPs, but that the HIP must provide a meaningful experience and be measured by the breadth and depth of the following qualities: they require significant time and effort from the students; they spark collaboration and meaningful interactions between students and faculty; they demand high expectations with public demonstration of competence; they provide experiences with diversity and periodic reflection;. and they provide frequent and quality feedback from staff and

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faculty. Thus, instead of limiting the scope to a precise experience, institutions could shift to focusing on the types of learning that occurs when students engage in a variety of activities, whether they are considered a HIP or other meaningful learning activity (Endersby & Maheux-Pelletier, 2020).

From our own experience at our current or previous institutions in the Midwestern U.S., colleges and universities may focus on the number of HIPs students complete in each timeframe and assume that participating in the original 10 HIPs automatically leads to student success. This may exclude students who are not participating in institutionally-sanctioned HIPs but who may participate in equally meaningful activities. However, institutions may deem these additional activities not effective simply because they do not take place under the auspices of student or academic affairs practitioners. Some scholars have begun to step outside of the original HIP list, including counting on-campus employment as educationally meaningful. For example, in a systematic literature review, researchers examined the extent to which academic libraries treated their student employment as a HIP (Mitola et al., 2018). They found that the on-campus employment experience held some inherent HIP qualities, such as time or effort and faculty and peer interactions, but that additional conditions, such as quality feedback, were lacking. Mitola et al.'s (2018) findings mirrored the argument made by Kuh (2009) that on-campus student employment has the potential to become a powerful experience if institutions intentionally incorporated the conditions of HIPs into the experience. A specific institutional example of how on-campus student employment has transformed into a HIP comes from Stony Brook University, through their Student Employment Program (McClellan et al., 2023; Savoca & Zalewski, 2016). This program encourages that the student worker experience aligns with the foundations of Kuh's (2008) HIPs, aiding in student preparation for meaningful and productive careers (McClellan et al., 2023; Savoca & Zalewski, 2016). Another example is the Iowa GROW program through The University of Iowa (The University of Iowa, 2024). Grounded in research, Iowa GROW focuses on helping students make connections between the skills and knowledge they develop in both their classes and their employment.

Similarly, Fede et al. (2018) explored how paid university employment affects skill development, viewing it through an experiential learning framework, which has similar qualities to HIPs. Students who participated in a specific university employment experience reported high levels of transferable skill improvement, such as communication and problem-solving, while also

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reporting high levels of civic engagement and valuing social responsibility. Fede et al. (2018) argued that student employment contains aspects of experiential education and that it can contribute toward student success.

The case for on campus employment to be considered as a HIP became even more established by the publication of *A Good Job: Campus Employment as a High-Impact Practice* (McClellan et al., 2023). The authors outlined the opportunity that on campus employment provides as a powerful learning experience and its potential as a HIP. McClellan et al. (2023) provided numerous examples of successful implementation of this approach on a variety of campuses as well as strategies for other institutions to follow suit. Though some institutions have expanded their scope of HIPs by including on-campus employment, this method may be limited in its reach of adult, low-income, or off-campus students. On-campus employment tends to be limited to a select population of students who may already be advantaged enough to be connected to opportunities on campus.

Considering that HIPs are not determined by the specific activity but by the type of experience they provide, they can expand beyond their physical location (Kuh, 2008). HIPs do not have to take place “on campus” to be effective. Some of the original HIPs mentioned such as service-learning and internships occur in off campus settings and in the community, and study abroad takes place in different countries. In this vein, institutions have already embraced that some of the most effective student learning takes place beyond campus walls (Baker, 2021). The next logical step would be for institutions to consider off-campus employment in the same context of learning impact.

### **Conceptualization of Off-Campus Work as a HIP**

So far, we have outlined why some students must work while in college and how working may make positive contributions to the student experience. Also, we have highlighted how institutions desire to increase the number of HIPs in which students participate but then tend to limit the scope of the opportunities, potentially excluding entire groups of students. Given these points, we argue that institutions would benefit from conceptualizing off-campus work into a HIP framework with the understanding that implementation may involve a shift in perspective and may vary depending on the unique situations of each campus.

### **Shift in Perspective**

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By conceptualizing off-campus employment as a HIP, institutions will transform a vital part of the student experience into a powerful learning opportunity, especially for those students who have limited access to traditional HIPs. Currently, many institutions of higher education are seeking opportunities to increase the numbers of on-campus positions available to students (Bauer-Wolf, 2019). However, no college or university will ever realize the potential goal of employing each or even most students on their campus. Also, the need for low-income students to find better-paying jobs off campus may be greater compared to their more affluent peers.

The approach to considering off-campus employment as a HIP is by no means a new idea. In the foreword to the book by McClellan et al. (2023), Kuh acknowledged the vast potential of off-campus employment as educationally effective pathways for student success and to consider its inclusion in the portfolio of HIPs an institution provides. He argued that institutions must value the influence of working while in college and not underestimate its impact on student learning, making sure to include off-campus employment in this consideration. Thus, it is reasonable to expect scholars and practitioners to begin to consider off-campus employment in their schemas of effective student experiences.

Off-campus employment may be viewed negatively by some institutional agents due to its potential connections to lower academic performance. Though removing off-campus employment from the student experience may seem to fix one problem, it does not address the reality of the student experience and is a solution coming from a framework of privilege. Scholars need to broaden the scope of the working students by identifying the power and privilege that is hard wired into institutions of higher education.

To incorporate off-campus work into HIPs requires a mental and cultural shift in the way institutions, scholars, and practitioners understand the learning environment. This shift will require moving toward educational frameworks that are more inclusive and place value on the experiences of those who have historically been left out of institutions of higher education. As effective student learning occurs in a variety of locations, institutions can start to become more open to activities that take place outside of their purview and embrace how other modalities provide pathways toward student success, expanding the scope of a standard college experience. For this shift to occur, institutions should move away from viewing themselves as a closed-off, single source of all learning, but as a far-reaching catalyst for activities that encourage skill development and growth no matter where students are located.

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**Strategies for Application**

We recognize that suggesting to reconceptualize off campus employment as a HIP may sound daunting to student affairs professionals and other higher education personnel tasked with delivering educationally effective student engagement initiatives. In a perfect-world scenario institutions could simply adopt off-campus employment as an HIP, like internships or co-ops, study abroad, or service-learning activities. However, we acknowledge that including off-campus employment into the ethos of the institution as a HIP would require vast additional financial and human resources, time and effort, and creation, development, and maintenance of pedagogical, curricular, and co-curricular structures that currently may not exist at most higher education institutions in the U.S. For that reason, we have divided our recommendations into three different strategies or sections depending on functional area, level of decision-making ability of our readers in this context, as well as gradation of implementation.

***Entry-Level Student Affairs Staff and College Instructors***

First, we recommend the mere consideration of off-campus work as a HIP by entry-level and student facing staff in areas such as advising, supervision, mentoring, and instruction. The initial step may involve staff to engage in a thought experiment or perspective shift. This would include staff and instructors reflecting upon their own thoughts and feelings about off-campus work and to consider it a necessary part of life for many of their students in the context of holistic student development.

Once these personal reflections have taken place, advisors, supervisors, and mentors could engage their students in conversations about their off-campus employment and to allow them time for reflection and meaning-making of the skills they are gaining or the relationships they are building. This could take place in one-on-ones, regular advising sessions, or even in small group advising or mentoring. Staff engaging in these conversations could use examples of reflective exercises from on-campus employment programs such as the ones previously mentioned of Iowa GROW and Stony Brook's Student Employment Program (McClellan et al., 2023; Savoca & Zalewski, 2016; The University of Iowa, 2024).

We also recommend that college instructors, including student affairs professionals who teach, plan intentional conversations and assignments around off-campus employment in academic courses, first-year seminars, major course of study classes, or career development courses. This type of academic integration already exists on college campuses through

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programs such as service-learning academic courses and could act as a guide to incorporate off-campus employment (Krsmanovic, 2022). To illustrate further, a first-year seminar course may include a unit on transferable skills and students could discuss what they have learned from all experiences, particularly highlighting off-campus work and reflect on their experiences.

College students who get to or who are asked to articulate their off-campus experiences of any kind during conversations with advisors, supervisors, or instructors, may begin to build increased awareness of self and others, may develop skills around reflection and meaning of work or employment, or may feel included and increasingly confident because their off-campus activities seem to matter to agents of their institution as much as their on-campus engagement (University of Iowa, 2024). To engage students in this way, staff and instructors can use simple questions, including reasons for securing employment; skills learned or developed; connection of employment skills to academic skills; fit and satisfaction at the off-campus workplace; engagement with co-workers or supervisors, including engagement across human difference; and connection of current employment to career development or future employment (University of Iowa, 2024).

***Mid-Level Student Affairs Staff, Directors, and Department Chairs***

Next, mid-level leaders who oversee departments or units have unique opportunities to bring off-campus employment into their team's approach to student engagement and learning. Mid-level leaders can begin this process by becoming aware of their team's collective perception of student off-campus employment and how it may be included in the department's vision and mission of educationally-purposeful activities. Directors and department chairs ought to decide, develop, and drive the messages they send about student engagement and how this may include off-campus work.

Moving from perceptions and messaging, mid-level leaders could then move toward capitalizing on existing infrastructure of current programs and services that allow students to bring their off-campus work experience to the fore in conversations, in activities, and in the curriculum. This approach may require some internal assessments of services and structures (Allworth et al., 2021). This assessment can examine whether the events, opportunities, and services provided have foundational elements such as being considerate of the schedules of working students but also high-level factors such as discovering opportunities for increase integration of off-campus work reflection.

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As a part of this infrastructure, mid-level leaders will want to build strong relationships and connections with employers and community members (Kimiecik et al., 2023). By positioning campus offices and departments outward, employers will feel more connected with the campus and have more opportunities to understand the student's experience, to eventually provide more learning for students in their jobs. Strong relationships can also help departments gain a better understanding of outside businesses and organizations, thus helping with the integration process when students bring these experiences back to campus.

***Vice Presidents of Student Affairs and Provosts***

A first step for leading administrators may be to create a campus-wide task force comprised of assessment professionals, institutional researchers, career services practitioners, community engagement professionals, faculty, and other representatives from academic and student affairs divisions, as well as a few members from major employers for students in the area. We recommend this task force to engage in wide-spread assessment efforts to understand how administrators, faculty, staff, and students view employment, and specifically off-campus employment (Allworth et al., 2021). The literature review provides ample suggestions for items to include in an assessment survey, but keys are to explore the perceptions and realities of the importance of off-campus employment for students. These baseline data may provide clues about the feasibility of implementing off-campus employment as HIPs.

In later stages, we recommend assessment of the effectiveness of actual off-campus work experiences. This could take many forms but should include indirect and direct assessments. Indirect assessments could be comprised of formative or summative surveys capturing self-reported data from students who work off campus. These surveys could assess student learning takeaways from their positions, impressions of supervision, leadership, or management, sense of belonging in an organization, or any other outcome that creates pathways for student success. Direct assessment may take more time and coordination but should include the observation by supervisors of students in off-campus employment experiences (Allworth et al., 2021). The institutional implementation workgroup could create universal rubrics that make the scoring of students' skills, attitudes, and behaviors easy and efficient. Qualitative assessment could include periodic student and employer focus groups or interviews. Whatever data are gathered from these assessment strategies should provide glimpses of effectiveness of off-campus employment as a

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HIP and garner data useful for student outcomes-based conclusions, marketing, and recruitment of future employers.

If after data collection academic and student affairs leadership may want to implement off-campus employment as HIPs, we recommend the taskforce or committee utilizes already-established learning outcomes as a guide (Allworth et al., 2021). These are general education learning outcomes, co-curricular learning or development outcomes, or specific college or academic division outcomes in schools of business, science and health, education, engineering, or liberal arts and sciences. If institutions have not established these outcomes, borrowing from higher education organizations such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), NSSE, or NACE may help establish early goals.

To offer effective educational practices, institutions need human and financial resources, which, particularly during recent and current times of a pandemic and impending enrollment cliffs, may be in short supply. However, if institutions want to take this step, committing staff or faculty to the implementation of off-campus work as a HIP is important. We suggest starting with a pilot program where institutions partner with a few specific employers in the community or region, a specific group of student employees, and a manageable group of faculty and staff who may serve as off-campus work mentors, advisors, and assessors (University of Iowa, 2024). We do not propose hiring new staff for this phase of the implementation but create incentives for faculty to use course reassignments or releases. To start, a pilot program may need only one coordinator from a given institution.

### **Conclusion**

We argue that a tiered and diversified approach to reconceptualizing off-campus student employment as a high impact practice may be a desirable step for college educators to take. Implementing what we propose, institutions have the chance to engage more students in educationally-purposeful activities and to provide more inclusive pathways to this type of engagement for college students who may not otherwise participate in them. Though there are a wide range of ways to approach implementation, we hope readers have found some steps to take to relate this to their functional area and institution, tapping into opportunities all students should have for learning, development, and growth.



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