

The Perks And Realities Of Working In College

BY ADMIN · PUBLISHED · UPDATED

This story originally appeared in *Forbes*.

Nearly **14 million** U.S. college students are working at least part-time while pursuing a degree. Unsurprisingly, most are choosing to work for financial benefits, some even out of financial necessity. But these part-time jobs in college have more to offer than just a paycheck.

Working while attending school gives college students the opportunity to apply concepts learned from professors and textbooks to real world situations, as well as gain professional skills that aren't necessarily taught in the classroom.



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Millions of students are opting to work inbetween their college courses.

Cameron Clark, currently a second year law student at Harvard University, worked between 10-20 hours per week while completing a Bachelor's degree in Sociology at the University of Texas, Austin.

His initial reasoning for seeking out a part-time job was monetary. His family was financially strained at the time, and he needed to find a way to support himself. But after taking a job at a resume editing company, Clark quickly realized there were more benefits than just the paycheck.

"As a pre-law student, I realized my application would be supported by work experience. My job was not at all related to my degree field, Sociology. But by having a job that gave me experience outside of that, I was able to add something additional to my resume," said Clark.

With recent reports showing that only **half of U.S. hiring managers** feel that today's new graduates are well prepared for the professional world, there is more pressure than ever for students to find a way to get early practice in professional skills such as time management, communication, and attention to detail. Working while still in college provides an opportunity for earlier development of these skills.

Ashley Paskill, a student at Temple University working multiple part-time jobs, credits her jobs with helping her improve her time management skills.

"Having to work a couple of jobs and balance school all at once has definitely helped me work on managing my time," said Paskill, "It's helped me learn to pay close attention to my schedule and learn how to juggle multiple priorities at once".

College jobs can also help students gain greater clarity over their own personal career goals by giving them a chance to "try" different positions with fewer strings attached.

In his job at a resume editing company, Clark wore many different hats throughout the two years he spent there. Though he started out in an entry level position making small edits to submitted resumes, his role with the company soon changed and his responsibilities grew. At some point, he was given the chance to hold roles in the business covering client consultation, quality control, training, and even management of new employees.

"I had the opportunity to experience different positions throughout the company. It gave me the chance to see how all of the little pieces and departments come together to create a holistic company," said Clark, "Because of that, I had a better understanding of business overall".

Some students forgo these opportunities out of fear that a part-time job will distract them from school. However, **research** shows that students who work between 10-15 hours per week during college are actually more likely to obtain a Bachelor's degree.

But it is important that they limit the hours spent dedicated to these jobs and seek out positions that provide them the flexibility to juggle both work and school.

"Finding a job that allows you to keep school your priority is key," said Erin Goodnow, CEO of **Going Ivy**, "Talking to your manager about flexibility in scheduling, especially leading up to finals week, is a skill you'll need your entire career. Your mistake is to think of balance as having to be equal. School comes first. If you see signs that your work isn't supporting your educational priorities, it's time to look for another job".

But finding a job that provides flexible scheduling is only half the battle. Students need to also be vigilant in keeping their priorities balanced themselves.

For Clark, this meant designating specific days of the week for certain tasks. For instance, he would set a Monday, Wednesday, Friday class schedule and dedicate those days entirely to school. This left Tuesdays and Thursdays for him to set time for work and focus solely on those tasks.

"It helps to functionally separate your responsibilities and get your head fully into that one space. Tell yourself 'Okay I'm studying now and my goals for studying today are this'," said Clark, "This helps you get fully focused on that one thing and helps you to accelerate in more than one priority."

With so many moving parts, it's easy for students to feel overwhelmed. So organizing schedules and managing time also means fitting in personal time.

Paskill admits that it can sometimes feel daunting trying to balance finishing up her degree and working multiple part-time jobs. Her answer is to always make time for herself to avoid feeling too stressed.

To help manage her busy schedule, Paskill uses a planner to map out her weeks and days, and marks down specific time for her to relax and spend time with her friends and family.

"Don't forget to take care of yourself. Be able to manage your stress and relax. Make it a point find time to be around your friends and family," said Paskill.

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