

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

The Spectator Online

Newspapers

5-28-2021

News of Student Employment Cuts Prompts Campus-Wide Concern

Megan Bobilin
Seattle University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online>

Recommended Citation

Bobilin, Megan, "News of Student Employment Cuts Prompts Campus-Wide Concern" (2021). *The Spectator Online*. 341.

<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/341>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Spectator Online by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.

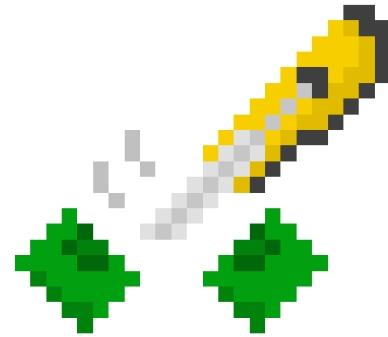


News of Student Employment Cuts Prompts Campus-Wide Concern

Megan Bobilin, Staff Reporter

Word travels fast among students when their job security is at stake. Ever since Seattle University Recreation (UREC) released an internal message last month, notifying their staff that student employment will be restricted to only work-study eligible students starting this summer, the news spread quickly.

Currently, UREC is the only known department on campus to have notified their employees about this new hiring directive, as such, it is unclear how many other departments may be affected.



Leon Lee

Amanda Deml, the Director of UREC, explained that the directive will be implemented starting next fiscal year, July 1, and would involve not renewing the employment contracts of current staff who do not qualify for work-study packages—which in most cases is upperclassmen, international and graduate students.

Deml was unaware if other departments communicated this to their students, however, her team felt a responsibility to be upfront and provide early notice to employees.

“We informed all of our student employees in an email on April 30,” Deml said. “We waited as long as we could... Over the past year we have been doing research and trying to identify as many options and avenues as possible to help mitigate any negative impact for our non-work-study students.”

The team at UREC has been trying to make the transition as smooth as possible by emotionally preparing their existing staff members and providing them with resources moving forward.

“This has been painful news for many of our students,” Deml said. “The most glaring and immediate challenge is not being able to keep current staff onboard that we have invested in and value as our community members. While we are working very hard to minimize any job losses, the reality is that institutional student employment funds are a limited resource.”

Student employees who heard about this new employment policy were hesitant to believe that the university had their best interests in mind.

Alyssa Sakamaki, a fourth-year biology major and a student employee who serves as a Peer Tutor for the Learning Assistance Programs (LAP), was worried about how her department might be impacted since LAP relies heavily on upperclassmen tutors who have expertise, training and experience in specific academic subjects.

Because student employees have very little power to leverage and cannot unionize, Sakamaki felt that the university could be strategically taking advantage of their most vulnerable employee population—students.

"I understand it's because of budget cuts, but this is not a process that's going to support the students—and that's what Seattle U's mission is about," Sakamaki said. "They're basically taking the money away from people that are the most vulnerable in our community. It's the easiest population to dismantle. Unlike faculty and staff, the student employee population has a really high turnover rate because we're only here for four years."

Andie Carroll, a fourth-year LGBTQ+ studies minor and biology major, who is employed as a Campus Tour Guide for the Admissions Department and a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ambassador for the College of Science and Engineering, agreed that this will have a negative financial impact for students.

"There are so many people who don't quite qualify for work study, but having that money is super important," Carroll said. "Maybe their parents are able to pay their full tuition, but they still have to pay for their own living expenses. It's also just more convenient to work on campus when you're a student who is trying to navigate balancing your school schedule."

Carroll also stressed that restrictions on student employment could be detrimental to admission rates and potentially draw new students away.

"I am very glad that Seattle U prioritizes work study—but they can't just get rid of all the other jobs completely," Carroll said. "Having lots of job opportunities attracts more students to the university. I get asked about on-campus jobs, probably once a tour, that's how important it is."

Student workers like Carroll are mainly disconcerted by the fact that no other departments have released a public statement about the new policy.

"The fact that the university is evading communication, and not being very clear about this whole situation is concerning, and makes me more skeptical about it," Carroll said. "When they are hiding something, it's never a good sign."

Brooke Wynalda, a fourth-year biology major and student employee for both UREC and Housing and Residence Life (HRL) was also upset at the university's lack of transparency.

"I have emailed the Student Financial Services, the CFO and a few others to try to pinpoint where this is coming from," Wynalda said. "When I asked, they all literally turned into the Spiderman meme and pointed at each other. The closest I got to a reason was that they hope this policy will help upperclassmen get jobs in the work field before they graduate."

However, Wynalda does not buy the university's reasoning. She says the policy will cause direct social harm on both work-study and non-work-study students by hindering their ability to build community.

For work-study students, Wynalda says the university would be publicly "outing" their financial situation by only hiring those who demonstrated need. For non-work-study students, being pushed off-campus for work could cause them to miss out on classes or social events on campus.

Wynalda also worries that underclassmen will not have the training to handle many of the on-campus jobs that require higher levels of experience and emotional maturity.

"At UREC and HRL, many student employees have been called upon to deal with students in crisis," Wynalda said. "At UREC injuries while playing sports, and at HRL anything from suicidal ideation and sexual assault counseling...The importance of having a peer employee there, who is older, to guide you, cannot be stressed enough."

All three student employees, Wynalda, Carroll and Sakamaki, are concerned the university is turning a blind eye to all the departmental challenges that may arise if they cut down the time frame of students' professional development and take away the opportunity for peer mentorship.

Ultimately, they believe students may choose not to attend Seattle U, given that a sustainable four-year job opportunity on campus may no longer be an option if their employment is stripped away after their two-year work study package expires, or if the option is taken away entirely for students without work-study.