

Minimum wage puts college graduates at disadvantage

STATES SHOULD ADJUST TO BAD ECONOMY, JOB MARKET

A gallon of milk costs \$4.59. A gallon of gas costs \$3.75. And a loaf of bread costs \$5.00, but the federal minimum wage rate stands at \$7.25.



BY ALI KRANTZLER
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How are college graduates supposed to support themselves with such low pay?

Minimum wage rates vary by state and leave some without a base line wage. Currently, in North Carolina, the federal minimum wage rate is \$7.25 per hour. Some states have raised their minimum wage rates, while others have not. Recently,

according to the National Employment Law Project, 10 states have begun to use an index which adjusts the minimum wage annually to keep pace with the rising cost of living.

"The remaining states and the federal government have not yet indexed their minimum wages," says NELP. "As a result,

they erode in value each year."

The cost of living has risen ever since the recession, and continues to increase due to the poor economic state of our country. Career Counselor for Adults Vivian Lutian discusses the problem at hand.

"(The) economy has stalled, there is a lack of jobs, and the unemployment rate is high (at) 8.6 percent," said Lutian. "Since the minimum wage has remained stable, I do not think it's going to present a problem. The larger problem is that economy has stalled. And so, especially here in N.C. we don't have the number of jobs available that other parts of the country do."

Despite minimum wage staying the same, the amount will affect people far and near, especially students who plan to graduate this spring. Minimum wage should be raised. If the bad economy is affecting the

entire country then all states should adjust their minimum wage.

"The federal minimum wage needs to be raised," says senior Amy McMin. "And I wish states would recognize it shouldn't be a 'minimum' wage but a 'living' wage."

This affects college students as well as families. In McMin's experience, earning such a low wage, many of her co-workers had to use food stamps from the government to pay for groceries to support their families.

On the other hand, many college students have loans to pay off after they graduate and will be affected similarly. "It's going to directly

influence my lifestyle," says senior Jordan Poirier. "I have human needs like food, shelter and gas and those products all cost a lot of money. Plus, I have to pay back an exorbitant amount of student loans to the government. I just don't see it being realistic."

But, there is an alternative to settling for a job that pays minimum wage. College graduates should aim for their dream job first rather than applying for a restaurant or barista job.

"The very best way to find a job nowadays is through networking and contacts," says Lutian. "It's the people who know you, who you know or the people they know. It's not in the contacts who are in your immediate circle, but your friends contacts in which you find the critical person who can give you a job. Its word of mouth from someone who knows you who can get you that job."

Certainly, the unemployment rate can be discouraging when starting a job search, but McMin gives us an important reminder.

"My mind needs stimulation and I mean more than memorizing produce codes," says McMin. "I do not want to be a waitress or have a service job. That is why I came to college."

With that said, until the wage rises, it's time to network and let the contacts flow.



Health center: a cause for complaint

Past the lake and tucked away in the corner of campus is a place students and faculty may find themselves hobbling towards with twisted ankles, complaints of stomach aches, or maybe just high hopes of getting out of class.

It's the Milner Student Health & Counseling Center.

As with most services on campus, there are mixed feelings about its helpfulness and accessibility. It seems, however, that there are more complaints than praise when it comes to people's overall experiences at the Health Center.

Why is that exactly? A lack of proper care? Scheduling restraints? An unwelcoming environment? Organizational issues?

Apparently, depending on whom you ask, it could be a matter of one — or all — of these issues. Quite frankly, the Student Health Center needs to step up its game.

Senior Taylor Shaw, for example, feels disappointed with the services the Student Health Center provided — or lack thereof.

"One time, I spilled boiling water all over myself, and I was in serious pain, and my friend ran to the Student Health Center for help, and they refused to come help me," said Shaw. "I was outraged. It was a serious situation and they should have taken the responsibility as health-care providers at this school to provide help."

Shaw isn't the only one frustrated by the lack of treatment she received.

"I went to the health center because I had been coughing

up blood, and they told me it was just allergies," says junior Alejandro Salcedo. "But when I went to an actual physician, it turned out to be a serious medical condition."

In addition to diagnostic conflicts, many students feel irritated by not being able to be treated by the nurse practitioner. Without the proper diagnosis and treatment, it almost seems pointless to even haul your sick butt all the way to the Health Center in the first place.

In response to these complaints, Director of Student Health Helen Rice explains that the amount of time they have a nurse practitioner is pretty standard.

"In the nine years I've been here, we haven't had (a nurse practitioner) full time," said Rice in a phone interview. "It's very expensive to have them full time. Most small colleges across North Carolina only have them intermittently, depending on where they are in location to doctor's offices or clinics. Most run pretty much like we do."

Obviously, Rice agrees that it would be preferable to have a nurse practitioner around all of the time, but it just isn't possible, and those who work in the center have no control over that.

There are other issues, however, that they do have control over that are not being properly addressed. For instance, I have heard several students complain about a lack of organization. One student reported that the center lost all of her paper work.

Others have felt unwelcomed and neglected when going to the center. A sophomore, who wished to remain anonymous, felt extremely discouraged by the lack of help she received from the Student Health Center.

"I'd been throwing up, hadn't slept for three days, had incredible headaches, and couldn't swallow, but since the nurse practitioner wasn't there, and I didn't have a fever, I wasn't able to get a note for class," said the anonymous sophomore. "I said, 'You have to help me out ... my teacher knows I'm sick, she just wants proof that I came.'"

"I asked if I could just get a handwritten note saying I was here, and she closed the door in my face while I was crying. I begged for help and was rudely told to go to urgent care, which was useless because I physically couldn't even walk there. It was so unhelpful and uncomfortable."

No system is ever perfect, but it definitely seems like some serious improvements should be made in order to make the community feel happier and healthier. Isn't that what the Health Center stands for in the first place?



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GREENLEAF CO-OP

(Basement of Mary Hobbs)

The Greenleaf, Guilford's student-run coffee cooperative is now open!

The Greenleaf is an experiment in an alternative business model as part of our vision of a better world. We are a non-hierarchical, member-run coffee cooperative. We strive to uphold our values of community, anti-oppression, social and economic justice, and sustainability.

Hours:
Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Closed Saturday
Sunday 1:30-5:30 p.m.

Come over and "espresso" yourself!

We'd love to serve you some of our delicious coffee.

Email greenleaf-coffee-cooperative@googlegroups.com if you have any questions.