

Work-Study Program Improved

UNC's program has become more flexible

By ESHANTHI RANASINGHE
Staff Writer

UNC's Federal Work-Study Program is the most competitive it has ever been, and officials promise that the improvements only have just begun.

In addition to the program becoming Internet-friendly, several new job opportunities were opened to students this year and wages were increased.

At the beginning of the fall 2002 semester, officials at the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid implemented a new job classification system for FWS students.

Under the new system, students are paid wages set to their skill levels instead of a flat rate.

"The goal of the job classification project was to establish a compensation system that differentiates among skill levels,

abilities and prior work experience — one that recognizes and pays for the wide array of job responsibilities and duties that a student performs," said Ann Trollinger, senior assistant director for the student aid office.

In the new system, supervisors of work-study students are given control over the amount paid to the students as long as it stays within limits set by the office.

The system consists of four classifications: pay levels S1 through S4. Jobs under the S1 category, such as that of a clerical assistant, require no experience or previous training. Students can receive wages of \$6 to \$7.75.

The highest pay level is S4, in which students might be paid anywhere from \$11.25 to \$13. These students are expected to perform advanced technical services.

"We wanted supervisors to have more flexibility in setting wage rates," Trollinger said.

"Students are now being rewarded for the level of duties that are being performed, and supervisors are now creating positions that are academic-related and career-related."

In previous years, officials at the student aid office had one set wage, which then would increase by 30 cents for each year of work and by 40 cents for the student's senior year.

For students employed on campus, the most they could make was \$8 during their senior years. As a result, officials had to over-award funds by as much as 300 percent each year to achieve full utilization of funding.

"Before we had to offer a lot more positions ... more than we had available. ... (Now) the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid is seeing an increase in students accepting their awards,"

Trollinger said.

"We feel that work-study wage rates are now more competitive with off-campus and other on-campus non-work-study jobs."

Under the new system, students in the FWS program sign up for jobs online through Student Central and then go in for an interview with the job's supervisor.

Officials plan to expand the FWS program to develop jobs for students who do not qualify for student aid. The Job Location Development program should be in place by the spring semester, Trollinger said.

"JLD is a part of the Federal Work-Study Program but differs from the existing program in that students do not have to be eligible for financial aid in order to participate in JLD's newly created positions," she said.

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

Lights to Boost Safety, Beauty of Franklin St.

Construction part of downtown initiative

By VIDA AWUMEY
Staff Writer

New benches have been placed on Franklin Street and custom light poles and fixtures soon will follow as part of Streetscape, the Town Council's plan to reconstruct downtown Chapel Hill.

The Streetscape initiative has been in operation since 1993 and is geared toward achieving the Town Council's vision for downtown. The program's managers came before the council in early November and requested funding to implement their ideas for improving the Franklin Street area.

The poles and fixtures will be added to Franklin Street along with the four benches already in place to begin reconstructing downtown Chapel Hill.

Curtis Brooks, one of Streetscape's landscape architects, said the Chapel Hill Arts Commission was responsible for selecting the bench design. He said the total cost of the benches was about \$3,500.

"They're not comfortable, but it's art," he said.

The Town Council approved Nov. 11 the installation of poles and fixtures that will be custom-made by Duke Power Company. Twenty lampposts will be placed on the 100 blocks of East Franklin and North Columbia streets at a cost of \$1.3 million for the entire lighting plan.

Town Council members said they decided to support option two out of four choices proposed by town staff because it will provide the best lighting and is the most aesthetically pleasing.

"Option two allows for the most focused lighting, and it is important to raise lighting in downtown Chapel Hill for safety issues," said council member Jim Ward.

The plan includes short, pedestrian-

level fixtures attached to tall light fixtures to provide even lighting on streets.

Council member Flicka Bateman said option two was the most attractive proposal and added that Streetscape is important because it is helping the economy of downtown Chapel Hill.

"It is good because downtown is the area University alumni come back to and also what visitors come to see," Bateman said.

Ward said the economic factors are what helped him to decide which option was best. "The downtown area is the front door to Chapel Hill and the economic engine that will encourage people to spend time and money," he said.

Bateman said council members based their decision on the pros and cons of each proposal rather than the costs.

"Option two was the most expensive, but it offered more flexibility in terms of where the light will shine," she said.

Both Bateman and Ward said they are supportive of Streetscape.

"They are right on schedule, and we need to continue to make downtown attractive," Bateman said.

Brooks said that the downtown represents the community and that the Streetscape program is money well spent in efforts to improve the whole downtown. Brooks also said that the program plans to reconstruct all of Franklin Street and that it is 30 to 40 percent complete.

"The plan was to do all of Franklin Street and across streets of Church, Graham and Rosemary streets that have not received as much recognition," he said. "But eventually, we will run out of money, and we hope private endeavors will come in to help with the reconstruction."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

Congress Addresses Attendance, Religion

By KEMP BALDWIN
Staff Writer

Student Congress will present the Faculty Council with a resolution next semester asking members to review and revise their attendance policy to be more tolerant of students who miss classes for religious reasons.

Congress passed the resolution at its last meeting, and Tony Larson, former speaker of Congress, said he plans to sign the resolution soon.

Larson said he was approached by a student who was upset with the policy. He said the student told him that Chancellor James Moeser had come to speak at N.C. Hillel and said the attendance policy only encourages — rather than requires — faculty to allow students to miss classes to observe religious holi-

days. Speaker Carey Richter will take the resolution to the Faculty Council next semester. She said although Congress can't force any changes, she hopes the council will take the resolution seriously.

"Their policy hasn't been updated since 1957, and this is just a statement," Richter said. "This is just a statement on behalf of the student body that it is out-dated."

Council Chairwoman Sue Estroff wasn't available for comment Monday.

Larson said Congress thinks the policy is unfair because the University calendar seems to shadow the Christian calendar. Breaks fall on Christmas, Easter and Good Friday, while people of other religions are forced to choose between class and their faith.

"The breaks are called Winter Break and such, but they always fall on these

holidays while other religions aren't accommodated," Larson said.

Mitchell Kaye, a member of N.C. Hillel, said that most faculty members are flexible but that he has friends who had professors who weren't accommodating.

Kaye said in previous years, Jewish students had to break their Sabbath — a day on which one is not supposed to work — because exams were scheduled on Saturdays. "I don't think anyone should suffer penalty for observing their faith," Kaye said. "But I don't think the holidays should all be days off because we would never go to school."

Larson said he thinks the policy needs to be changed to ensure that people of all faiths have the ability to practice their religion without jeopardizing their grades. "All it needs is a change in the language to make it not just encouraged — so

that if a student comes to a faculty member ahead of time, they can be assured they can practice their faith," he said.

But Larson also said Congress understands that all this must be done within reason. "We are not asking for them to write the calendar around every single religious holiday," Larson said. "We just want them to allow students to practice their faith unpenalized."

Larson said this is the first resolution of its kind that he could remember Student Congress passing. But both Larson and Richter said they believe the Faculty Council will think seriously about the resolution. Richter said, "They've been great this year in terms of student concerns."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

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