

**The Impact of the Federal Work-Study Program
on First-Generation College Students of Color**

AS
36
2018
EDUC
.D43

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Education

In

Equity and Social Justice

by

Mario Alberto De Anda

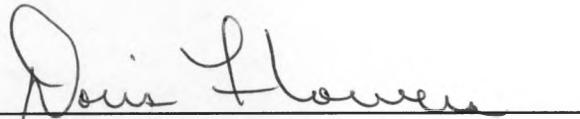
San Francisco, California

May 2018

Copyright by
Mario Alberto De Anda
2018

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

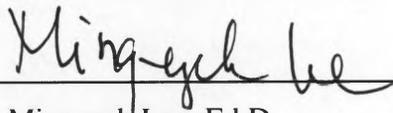
I certify that I have read *The Impact of the Federal Work-Study Program on First-Generation Students of Color* by Mario Alberto De Anda, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Education: Equity and Social Justice at San Francisco State University.



Doris A. Flowers, Ph.D.

Professor

Department of Equity, Leadership Studies,
and Instructional Technologies



Ming-yeh Lee, Ed.D.

Professor

Department of Equity, Leadership Studies,
and Instructional Technologies

The Impact of the Federal Work-Study Program
on First-Generation College Students of Color

Mario Alberto De Anda
San Francisco, California
2018

This study set out to understand how the federal work-study (FWS) program currently plays a role at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in supporting college students, particularly students of color, toward college completion and in their career decision-making. The study looked at SFSU as an institutional case study comprised of five individual student case studies. All student participants were high-need and first-generation in college. The findings supported previous research that looked at the relationship between student employment and college persistence and career decision-making but also identified factors that did not support previous research.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Denis Flowers
Chair, Thesis Committee

May 22, 2018
Date

PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the five students who shared their personal stories and experiences for the benefit of the campus community at San Francisco State University (SFSU). I also wish to thank Peter Coe and Barbara Hubler at the Officer of Student Financial Aid at SFSU for their support in recruiting students. Lastly, I wish to thank my review committee, Dr. Doris A. Flowers and Dr. Ming-yeh Lee, for their support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Appendices.....	viii
Chapter 1	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose of Study.....	4
Research Question	4
Significance of the Study.....	4
Assumptions	5
Terms and Definitions	6
Chapter 2	9
Literature Review	10
Involvement and Persistence	10
Job Congruence and Satisfaction.....	13
Career Decision Making.....	16
The Role of the Student Employment Supervisor	18
Chapter 3	21
Research Paradigm/Methods	21
Data Collection.....	23
Data Analysis.....	25
Limitations.....	26
Reliability and Validity	27
Chapter 4	28
Student Participants	28

Findings	31
Involvement and Persistence	32
Job Congruence and Satisfaction.....	34
Career Decision-Making	36
The Role of the Student Employment Supervisor	38
Chapter 5	40
Conclusion.....	40
Discussion.....	43
Recommendations	44
References	48
Appendices	51

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
1. Personal FWS Employment History Survey.....	51
2. Phone Interview Questionnaire.....	53

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

A study conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) in 2015 found that “if current trends in the labor market persist, by 2030 California will have a shortage of 1.1 million workers holding a bachelor’s degree,” (Johnson, Mehia, & Bohn, 2015). The shortfall is based on economic trends “that show a continued increase in the demand for highly educated workers, a demand that is not going to be met by expected increases in the supply of college graduates,” (Johnson et al., 2015). PPIC estimates that by 2030, “38 percent of all jobs will depend on workers with at least a bachelor’s degree, but only about 33 percent of workers will have one,” (Johnson et al., 2015). This poses a challenge to California on two levels: improving low statewide college completion rates, particularly for students of color, and preparing students to be successful in their chosen career pathways after college.

In recent years, California has taken on a series of institutional reform initiatives aimed at meeting the demand for college graduates by 2030. Some of these reforms include the College Promise Program that is focused on making college affordable and the California Acceleration Project (CAP) that is working to address inequities in remedial education. However, one tool that is being overlooked by the state and its higher education institutions is the federal work-study (FWS) program. In its current form, the FWS program is falling short of its expectations but, based on

studies about the benefits of student employment on college persistence and career decision-making, the program could make significant contributions to California's efforts to meet the demand for college graduates by 2030.

Since it was established in 1964, FWS has grown into a \$1.2 billion federal need-based program extending across 3,400 post-secondary institutions nationally and reaching over 750,000 college students with an average award of \$1,600. Despite this expansion to the program, "it's not clear that the program works very well either as a jobs program or a financial aid program," (Scott-Clayton, 2011). Legislation approved through the Higher Education Act of 1972 explicitly emphasized that the program serve "students with great financial need," (Gladieux, 1995). Based on the 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), however, "fewer than half of undergraduate work-study recipients are needy enough to qualify for a Pell Grant, and 20 percent come from families earning more than \$100,000 a year" (Scott-Clayton, 2011). As a career development program, FWS is also falling short of its full potential.

Federal aid policy requires that, "to the maximum extent practicable, a school must provide FWS jobs that complement and reinforce each recipient's educational program or career goals," (Federal Student Aid Handbook, 2012). Yet again, federal work-study jobs "are typically low-skill clerical or service positions unrelated to students' studies or future career plans. In other words, they are the type of jobs most students would be able to find even without a work-study subsidy," (Scott-Clayton, 2011). It is no surprise that if the program is falling short of its own expectations, that the

success of the program in terms of degree completion and employability after college is at best dismal with participants only “3.2 percentage points more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree after six years and 2.4 percentage points more likely to be employed after graduation,” (Scott-Clayton, 2011). This paper calls for reforming the existing federal work-study program to increase college persistence and completion rates and expose high-need students of color to professional career opportunities.

Problem Statement

“The employment of students is not the province of any government agency, and, on the campus, the duty may be shared by several offices. Thus, it has not been studied to the extent of many other common student experiences, and information from various sources is not always up-to-date,” (Kincaid, 1996, p. 3). For many first-generation and low-income youth, working while in college is not an option. Institutions package federal work-study funds into a student’s financial aid package to help meet the student’s demonstrated financial need, typically obligating the student to work from 10-15 hours per week. While studies point to the positive benefits of student employment, federal work-study jobs have not been given the proper attention as an institutional tool for persistence and career preparation. According to Merisotis (2011), “redesigning educational programs to bridge education and jobs more effectively is at the heart of almost all higher education policy debate.”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand how the FWS program currently plays a role at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in supporting college students, particularly students of color, through college completion and career decision-making.

Research Questions

The study puts forth a fundamental question crucial to this research: How is the existing federal work-study program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) currently supporting students of color toward college completion and in their career decision-making?

Significance of the Study

This work could have significant implications on California's college completion rates and demand for college graduates by 2030. By informing state policymakers, college practitioners, students and other constituents about the benefits that can be derived from meaningful student employment experiences, higher education institutions can leverage a federal program to help impact a statewide initiative. Because the program targets high-need students, the FWS can also be deployed as a tool for redressing inequities in college graduation rates and the labor market.

California currently graduates 64 percent of its college students in six years. Black and Hispanic students, however, are graduating at a six-year rate of 45 percent and 53 percent, respectively (College Completion, 2013). Overall, White and Asian students are graduating at a rate of 20 – 30 percentage points higher than Black and

Hispanic students. These inequities persist beyond college into the labor force. A recent study by the Center for American Progress highlights:

“that even after considering positive factors such as increased education levels, African Americans have less wealth than whites. Less wealth translates into fewer opportunities for upward mobility and is compounded by lower income levels and fewer chances to build wealth or pass accumulated wealth down to future generations,” (Hanks, Solomon, & Weller, 2018).

These inequities have been sown into the social and economic fabric of American society. To reverse them, California must leverage existing tools, such as the federal work-study program (FWS), that through reform can produce conditions that are conducive to a more equitable education system and labor market across racial and economic lines.

Assumptions

It is important to clarify that this paper does not question the validity of FWS. The program, while falling short of its full potential, serves low-income youth and allows many students the opportunity to pursue undergraduate studies. Research of “the past generation leads to some intriguing conclusions. Student employment usually benefits the student. It has obvious financial benefits, does not harm grades, can improve retention, and appears to boost career achievement after graduation,” (Kincaid, p. 3). This study accepts the premise that student employment is a good social benefit for college students and it puts forth the argument that the program has not been tapped to its full potential.

Terms and Definitions

Operational Definitions.

College persistence, according the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, measures “students who return to college at any institution for their second year, while the retention rate is the percentage of students who return to the same institution for their second year,” (2017). National Center for Education Statistics defines “retention as an institutional measure and persistence as a student measure,” (Wyrick, 2014). While retention tracks student matriculation at a specific institution, college persistence tracks student matriculation throughout one or multiple institutions. A student may matriculate at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college and graduate. The student is no longer retained at the two-year college but is persisting toward college completion and is now retained at a four-year college. For the purpose of this study, we will define college persistence based on matriculation at a four-year, public institution based in San Francisco, California.

College completion, for the purpose of this study, is used to indicate graduation from a four-year, public institution and is capped at six years from matriculation in college. Completion of a two-year college degree is not considered a qualifying measure for the purpose of this study.

Career Preparedness, for the purpose of this study, will rely on the definition of career-readiness used by The Glossary of Education Reform, which is used to identify “students who are considered to be equipped with the knowledge and skills deemed to be

essential for success in the modern workforce.” Specifically, career preparedness will be measured based on how congruent the student’s FWS experience is to her/his college major or career interests.

Theoretical/Stipulative Definitions

In addition to the operational definitions, it is important to include stipulative definitions for the following terms that are often used interchangeably to mean different things. As such, the study has taken the steps to define first-generation in college, student of color, and federal work-study eligibility.

First-generation college student has multiple meanings that yield varying results, which make it important to understand that “the definition has an enormous impact on the size of the population of students, the researchers found.” (Smith, 2015). The term is often used interchangeably to restrict first-generation in college status to students from households where neither parent has completed a bachelor’s degree or only one parent has completed a bachelor’s degree. Additionally, it may be used to withhold first-generation college student status for students from households where at least one parent has completed an associate’s degree. Because the purpose of this study is focused on the federal work-study program and on a narrow population of college students at a four-year, public institution, we will rely on the definition of the term first-generation college student as interpreted by the U.S. Department of Education’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is used to determine student eligibility for the federal work-study program. The FAFSA “defines parent college completion as having

received a Bachelor's degree or more advanced degree. If a parent has obtained an Associate's degree or certificate but not a Bachelor's degree, the "High school" option should be marked because this parent has not completed a 4-year college degree program," (The Glossary for Education Reform).

Student of color is used to identify students who are American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Federal work-study eligibility is used to identify students who are enrolled in the federal work-study program on campus and excludes students who are working on campus outside of the federal work-study program. According to the U.S. Department of Education, students must complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and demonstrate need eligibility for the federal work-study program.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand how the FWS program currently plays a role at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in supporting college students, particularly students of color, through college completion and career decision-making.

Research Questions

The study puts forth a fundamental question crucial to this research: How is the existing federal work-study program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) currently supporting students of color toward college completion and in their career decision-making?

Literature Review

Research specific to the impact of the federal work-study program on college completion and career decision-making is limited. This study looked at literature that touched on student employment factors that play a role in helping college students succeed in college and in their chosen career fields after college. Four key pillars of student employment were identified for this purpose: student involvement and persistence, congruence and satisfaction, career decision-making, and the role of student employment supervisors.

Involvement and Persistence

“Astin’s Involvement Theory posits that students who are more actively involved in aspects of their college experience achieve higher grades, are more satisfied, and have higher persistence rates than students who are less actively involved,” (Kindcaid, p. 3). Astin (1984) defines student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience.” Student employment when intentional and effectively managed can provide the student with a sense of involvement and connection to the campus community. This sense of connection to the campus community through involvement in turn promotes student persistence. “Two of the most powerful trends today in retention efforts, in fact, are directly connected to this issue of student involvement,” (Noel, 1997, p. 32). Astin expands on the relationship between retention and student involvement by showing “that campus employment is positively related to retention,” (Wilkie & Jones, p. 80). Astin’s research is also supported by Wenc’s (1983) research that “posits that the higher persistence rates among students who are employed part-time in campus jobs result from students being and feeling more highly integrated into the institution’s structures,” (Wilkie & Jones, p. 87).

Kulm & Cramer (2006) studied “the effects of employment on university undergraduate students on 1) student role, 2) family relationships, 3) social interactions, and 4) persistence (the continuation of enrollment until graduation,” (p. 928). The study used a qualitative approach to survey approximately 500, 19-24 year old, mid-western university undergraduates, of which 60% were female and 40% male and 72.7% were 20

to 22 years old.

“Student role was defined as the student's grade point average, student's study time in hours per week, and student's class attendance. Family relation was defined as the student's behavioral, psychological, and social relations among various members of the nuclear family and the extended family. Social interaction was defined as the student's interaction with members of a peer group, and persistence as the continuation of enrollment until graduation,” (Kulm & Cramer, p. 928).

The findings from the study suggest “that the more time a student spends on campus the more likely that student will succeed. Depending on the type of employment a student has, the student may actually find that their job provides the socializing needed to stay connected,” (Kulm & Cramer, p. 931). Additionally, the study found that “employment and persistence toward a degree were positively correlated,” (p. 931). This study points to the impact that student employment can have on student involvement as a way of promoting student persistence towards college completion.

In a separate study, Van de Water (1985) examined “the impact of working on the academic performance and persistence of a sample of full-time undergraduates enrolled in Washington’s public and private colleges and universities during the period from Fall 1983 through Spring 1985,” (p. 57). The study explored multiple questions that included looking at the impact that working part-time has on student persistence. The study

included 12 higher education institutions¹ with a total student sample size of 3,184, consisting of three subgroups: 1) students receiving a state work-study award (28%), 2) students receiving a college/institutional work-study award (37%), and 3) students receiving financial aid but not working (35%). The study design consisted of institutional student records, a survey for campus administrators, and a survey of student participants.

“Survey results show that part-time work has a positive effect on student persistence,” (p. 63). Van de Water (1985) also established that “students who work perform as well academically as those who are not employed,” (p. 64). One interesting outcome of the study was that “students were split on their perceptions of the effect of working on their academic performance,” (p. 65). Only 11 percent of students surveyed “reported that working part-time improved their academic performance, and 46 percent reported that working hurt their academic performance,” (p. 65). An additional 43 percent “reported that working part-time did not affect their academic performance,” (p. 65).

While the findings did not have a strong correlation between part-time student employment and persistence, it did support the notion that working part-time does not negatively impact a student’s academic performance. Other studies point to the impact of job congruence or how well the job is aligned to the student’s academic or career interests on job satisfaction.

¹ University of Washington, Washington State University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, Lower Columbia Community College, North Seattle Community College, Spokane Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, Pacific Lutheran University, Seattle University, University of Puget Sound, Whitworth College

Job Congruence and Satisfaction

A 1992 study conducted by Kane et. al. found that students “who held jobs that were congruent with their career interests were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than students who worked in positions that were unrelated to their interests,” (Luzzo, 1995, p. 26). Fifteen years later, Larkin et. al. expanded on these findings by suggesting that older students tend to align their employment to their career interests at higher rates than their younger counterparts with less work experience. “Holland (1985) has stated that ‘a congruent or fitting environment is one in which a person’s preferred activities and special competencies are required . . . and . . . reinforced,’” (Kane et. al., 1992, p. 139).

Kane (1992) examined the impact of college employment based on students obtaining high quality jobs and student procurement of employment congruent to the student’s college major or career interest and looked at the impact of congruent jobs on job satisfaction. A qualitative approach was used to survey a random, voluntary sample of 5,350 undergraduates. A total of 1,438 students, of which 53.6% were women and 14.4% were minority students, responded. Closed-end and Likert-type scales were used to collect the responses.

The results suggest “that students employed in par-time jobs congruent with their career interests were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs,” (Kane et. al., 1992, p. 142). However, the findings also suggest that “congruent jobs are not likely to be satisfying if they are of poor quality,” (Kane et. al., 1992, p. 143). Additionally, “students defined satisfying *jobs* as those that were ‘flexible for the needs of students’ (e.g.,

convenient hours) (65.9%), offered 'good relations with co-workers' (58.9%), and offered 'good relations with supervisors' (55.7%), rather than those that offered opportunities for furthering their education," (Kane et. al., 1992, p. 142). As one of the first studies to document this phenomenon, the study provides some of the first insights into the relationship between job congruency and job satisfaction and also provides insights into how students define a good job.

In 2007, Larkin set out "to ascertain whether the positive relationship between job congruency and job satisfaction still existed 15 years after the Kane et. al. (1992) study," (Larkin et. al., 2007, p 87). Additionally, the study looked "into why students of all ages chose their jobs, what made those jobs satisfying to them, and whether or not the jobs held potential for future employment," (Larkin et. al., 2007, p. 87). The study expanded on research around college student employment by not simply looking at college students based on class level but rather dividing students based on age in order to capture information about non traditional students who were classified as students over the age of 25. Similar to Kane (1992), the study used a qualitative approach to survey a voluntary sample of 539 college students—under age 20 ($n = 143$), ages 20–24 ($n = 253$), and over age 25 ($n = 141$)—at a small northeastern state university college. Students over 25 years of age were classified as nontraditional students and "were more likely to be married, have children, live independently, and not have attended college continuously since high school," (Larkin et. al., 2007, p. 88). A 66-item survey with a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) was used to measure:

1. *Career Relevance* - the congruence of students' jobs and career interests.
2. *Motivation* – the student's reasons, such as pay, benefits, experience, etc. for choosing a job.
3. *Job Satisfaction* - 13 job characteristics that included pay, benefits, work schedule, coworkers, job location, how much fun the job is, opportunities for advancement, professional growth offered by the job, job security, job match with abilities, learning skills useful for future career, recognition for work, and communication with the supervisor were used to measure job satisfaction.

The study supported Kane's previous findings that "the perceived career relevance of a job was moderately correlated with job satisfaction," (Larkin et. al., 2007, p. 91). However, the study also suggests that "as the age of the students increases, so does the career relevancy of their employment," (Larkin et. al., 2007, p. 92). Older nontraditional students were more likely to have jobs that were congruent with their careers than their younger counterparts who "were more influenced in their decision-making by job location, schedule flexibility, and having friends working there," (Larkin et. al., p. 93).

This study is instrumental in that it sheds insights into how age plays a role in students identifying jobs that are congruent to their career interests. While Kane et. al. (1992) provides some of the first insights into the connection between job congruency and job satisfaction during the college years, this study provides some of the first insights into how age and job experience play a role in students matching their career interests to

their employment. A logical next step to how job congruency plays a role in helping students explore academic or career interests in a real-world setting is to examine the impact that student employment has on career decision-making.

Career-Decision Making

Job congruency also appears to play a role in career decision-making. Luzzo (1995), Kane et al. (1992), and other experts found “that the degree to which employment experiences tend to enhance the career decision-making process for college students may depend, at least in part, on the how similar or congruent a part- or full-time job is with an individual’s career interests and aspirations,” (Luzzo, 1995, p. 25). The benefits of student employment on career decision-making stretch beyond college. “Phillip Gleason found that students who worked consistently in college were more successful (in terms of earnings and employment rates) in their first year or two after graduation,” (Kincaid, p. 5). Several studies point to the benefits of student employment on career decision-making. This study specifically examines how involvement and job congruence further enhance or

Similar to Astin’s Theory of Involvement that established a relationship between involvement and being connected to the campus community, which in turn results in improved academic performance, Peterson (1993) set out to “explore the nature of the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and integration (overall, social, and academic) of underprepared college students,” (p. 661). A total of “1,549 academically at-risk of dropping out, full-time students of the General College, at the

University of Minnesota, a large, urban, commuter, doctoral-granting, public university,” (p. 667). This sample was reduced to 678 students based on how they registered. These students received a mail survey and 62 percent or 418 of them responded.

One survey instrument was used to capture information about career decision-making self-efficacy and a second tool, an integration scale, was used to measure the level of overall social and academic integration. The study found a moderate correlation between career decision-making self-efficacy and goals as well as a moderate correlation with overall integration. “However, career decision-making self-efficacy had a stronger relationship with academic integration (.42) than with social integration (.34),” (p. 671). Peterson (1993) established “a relationship between career decision-making and social and academic integration of underprepared students,” (p. 670).

Other studies have established a relationship between career decision-making and quality of employment. “Several studies have demonstrated that part-time jobs, and especially high quality part-time jobs, may actually contribute to the career development of the college student,” (Kane, 1992, p. 138). Previously, Healy, O’Shea, and Crook (1985) had established “a strong relationship between quality of employment during college and levels of career maturity. Students employed in higher status occupations also had higher grade point averages (GPAs) and were more career-mature,” (Kane, 1992, p. 138). Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero (1982) also established “that quality part-time jobs provide students with opportunities for learning, social interaction, and for

exercising initiative and responsibility-job skills often considered the cornerstones of career success,” (Kane et al., 1992, p. 139).

In the real job market, employers are finding that students who graduate with campus employment experience “exhibit the following behaviors: 1) produce better work, 2) accept supervision better, 3) are better time managers, 4) have better team skills, 5) make a more rapid transition, and 6) have more realistic expectations,” (Kincaid, 1995, p. 5). This is in part attributed to the fact that “recent empirical investigations have provided clear evidence of an important link between student employment and indices of effective career-decision making,” (Luzzo, 1995, p. 25). To connect and make these student employment experiences meaningful for students, committed student employment supervisors who understand how student employment plays a role in college completion and career decision-making for students are necessary.

The Role of the Student Employment Supervisor

“Campus work supervisors are ideally positioned to be highly effective ‘retention agents’ for the students who work with them. In fact, students often say it is their work supervisor who knows them best—better than any teacher or advisor on campus,” (Noel, 1995, p. 32). According to Noel (1995), student employment professionals are in a position to help ensure that student jobs are congruent to the students’ academic or career interests and “ensure that students participate in a high-quality work experience,” (p. 33). Student employment professionals play one additional important role in that they are in a position to be stewards of the institution’s overarching goals by aligning them to the

goals and mission of student employment jobs (Noel, p. 34). Noel (1995) defines these overarching institutional goals to include “retention, productivity, sensitivity to diverse populations, quality service, quality performance,” (p. 34).

“An obvious, but often forgotten, reality of the workplace is that the supervisor is the primary motivator,” (Little and Chin, 1995, p. 110). It is the student employment supervisor who can inspire and motivate students by providing them with meaningful and high-quality student employment experiences. This starts with the context of the job from the environmental conditions to emotional support. Little and Chin (1995) identified having an assigned workstation, adequate lighting, a place to store personal possessions, and others as key motivators for students. Often in student employment jobs, “students are given workstations in corners or separate from other workers...assigned tasks not required of regular employees,” (Little & Chin, 1995, p. 110). In some cases, students are given fewer and inadequate tools, supplies, equipment, and other resources. “The economics realized from inadequate equipment for student employees is quickly cancelled out in the loss of student motivation for productive work,” (Little & Chin, 1995, p. 111). For student employment to be meaningful, students must be treated with respect and professionally, while accepting that their primary function at the institution is not to work, but rather to be a student.

Little & Chin (1995) identified factors that prevent the student employment supervisor from providing a meaningful work experience for the student. One factor is that “for many student supervisors, supervision is a secondary or even tertiary

responsibility,” (Little & Chin, 1995, p. 112). Another factor is that students being perceived “as part-time employees may also influence the quality of supervision,” (Little & Chin, p. 112). There is also the factor that “many supervisors of students have never had specific training in the art of supervision,” (Little & Chin, p. 112). Any redesign of the federal work-study (FWS) program must consider these limitations to student employment supervision as they will inevitably determine not only whether the student has a meaningful student employment experience but also whether the student makes it to college completion.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand how the FWS program currently plays a role at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in supporting college students, particularly students of color, through college completion and career decision-making.

Research Questions

The study puts forth a fundamental question crucial to this research: How is the existing federal work-study program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) currently supporting students of color toward college completion and in their career decision-making?

Research Paradigm/Methods

The research methodology selected for this study reflects aspects of qualitative research and case study theory. A qualitative approach was identified as an effective research strategy for this study in order to understand “situations and events from the viewpoint of the participants,” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 7). This study is focused on understanding the dynamics of student employment at SFSU from the student participant’s perspective. This research is intended to create new conditions at SFSU that will deepen the student employment experience of students. Additionally, this study uses a case study theory in analyzing the student employment experience of five federal work-study (FWS) students at SFSU. Case study theory is used in studying a single example

“extensively and varied data are collected and used to formulate interpretations applicable to the specific case (e.g. a particular school board) or to provide useful generalizations,” (Fraenkel et. al, 2015, p. 13). These two approaches combined allowed for an in-depth analysis of how the FWS program at SFSU operates and the types of experiences that student derive from student employment.

Site

This study was conducted at San Francisco State University (SFSU), where the researcher is currently completing graduate studies. The campus is located in San Francisco, California and serves a total of 30,000 students, with undergraduates making up the bulk of 26,000 students. The institution is one of 23 campuses under the California State University System (CSU). About 18 percent of undergraduate students reach completion in four years compared to 48 percent in six years. These are comparable graduation rates across ethnic groups: Hispanic (44 percent), Black (42 percent), and White (44 percent) students. Only Asian students exceed the average graduation rate with a 57 percent six-year rate, according to the Student Achievement Data on the SFSU website.

Sampling

A total of five undergraduate students voluntarily participated in the study. To participate, students had to meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a first-generation in college – neither parent has received a bachelor’s degree

- Be a student of color: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Be currently enrolled or previously participated in the Federal Work-study program at SFSU
- Be currently enrolled full-time as an undergraduate student at SFSU

All students were first-generation in college (see operational definition), were enrolled full-time for the fall of 2017 at SFSU, and were participating in the federal work-study (FWS) program. Two students identified as Asian, two as African-American, and one as Hispanic/Latino.

Data Collection

The researcher coordinated with the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) at SFSU to recruit students for the study. A formal written request was submitted to OSFA for approval by the vice president to invite students to participate. Approval was issued for a postal mailing to be sent to eligible students through OSFA but electronic communication was understandably restricted for more sensitive campus communication with students. An invitation was mailed to 161 undergraduate students through OSFA. The invitation was sent on official OSFA letterhead and included a brief overview of the purpose of the study and a profile of the researcher. It also included the list of eligibility requirements, instructions for contacting the researcher if interested in participating, and a list of expectations for participation:

- complete and submit the student consent form

- complete the Personal Federal Work-Study Employment History Online Survey
- participate in a 45-minute in-person, individual interview
- receive a \$20 gift card for full participation

The study employed two instruments for data collection. The Personal FWS Employment History Survey, an online questionnaire that was administered using Survey Monkey, was used to capture categorical demographic data about the student.

Demographic information included the student's name, year in college, major(s), career objective, cumulative GPA, and previous FWS employment history. A survey consisted of 29 items using a Likert scale or open-ended questions. The second tool consisted of a 45-minute individual phone interview.

A total of seven students contacted the researcher via email expressing interest in participating. The students then received an electronic reply from the researcher with more details about the study, a consent form requiring their signature, and a link to the survey. Students were allowed up to two weeks to complete and submit the consent form and survey. Of the seven students, five completed and submitted a consent form and survey. Of these five, four completed the 45-minute phone interview. Phone interviews were conducted within two weeks of receipt of the survey and were personalized to each individual student case study.

Data Analysis

The five participants who submitted a consent form and the online survey were randomly assigned a letter value from A – E for tracking and analyzing data and for privacy issues. A qualitative analysis combined the data from the online survey and phone interviews to understand the impact of the federal work-study program at SFSU on college persistence and career decision-making. Student demographic data was used to verify eligibility for the study and create a student case study. Information about the student's cumulative grade point average (GPA), grade level, major, career interest, and student employment position were used to develop an academic and career profile of the student. This information was analyzed to study the relationship between student employment and college persistence and career decision-making.

Sixteen items on the Likert-scale were studied for insights into: 1) the relationship between student employment and academic and career goals, 2) congruence of student employment to the student's academic or career goals, 3) the context of the job in terms of professionalism and environment, and 4) the role of the student employment supervisor. Information from the personalized phone interviews was combined with the survey data to form a more in-depth profile of each student participant and examined individual data elements in the context of the four categories of the study: involvement and persistence, job congruence and satisfaction, career decision-making, and role of the student employment supervisor.

Once a complete student case study was developed for each participant, the data was analyzed for trends and findings unique to each student in order to capture a diverse profile of San Francisco State University (SFSU) as the institutional case study. An example of a trend was that all students agreed that they felt supported by their supervisor and colleagues at their student employment site. A unique finding was defined as something that emerged as unique to one or two students. An example of this was that two students indicated that while they did not feel challenged in their student employment and did not find their jobs to be congruent to their academic or career goals, they were still satisfied with their jobs as factors such as flexibility and ability to do homework were more important. The data was then analyzed to understand how the existing federal work-study program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) is currently supporting students of color toward college completion and in their career decision-making.

Limitations

This study was limited by the sample size of five case studies. The study was also limited by the fact that it looked only at the short-term impact versus long-term impact of student employment on college persistence and career decision-making by including only current undergraduates and not college graduates. College graduates may reveal more about the impact beyond college. However, this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of current undergraduate students, which serve to inform current practices and which may differ from those previously experienced by graduates of the college.

Another limitation of the study is that it did not include comparison groups of students not working and students involved in non-federal student employment to determine whether or not the findings are unique to the federal work-study program.

Reliability and Validity

The study took specific steps to safeguard against threats to the internal validity of the study in order to demonstrate the impact of the FWS program on college persistence and career preparation. Potential threats to the internal validity of this study include history, maturation, instrumentation, location, and selection of subjects. To help ensure the internal validity of the study, the researcher conducted the phone interviews within a two-week period of receiving the survey to help protect against history and maturation threats. By conducting the interviews within a two-week period, there is less opportunity for specific events and the passage of time to influence the validity of the study. All the interviews took place at a time convenient to the student and lasted no more than 45-minutes each.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to understand how the federal work-study (FWS) program currently plays a role at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in supporting college students, particularly students of color, through college completion and career decision-making. The findings for this study were generated through an online survey and phone interviews with undergraduate students currently enrolled in the FWS program at SFSU.

Student Participants

A total of five full-time undergraduates at SFSU participated in the study. Five participants completed and submitted the online survey and four participated in the 45-minute phone interview. All students were first-generation in college (see operational definition), were enrolled full-time for the fall of 2017 at SFSU, and were participating in the federal work-study program. Two students identified as Asian, two as African-American, and one as Hispanic/Latino. The sample represented three males and two females. Students were identified by a randomly assigned letter code from A to E.

Student A identified as Asian and was enrolled as a 4th year junior majoring in drama. The student described his career interest as “working at jobs that are related to technical parts (e.g. lighting, sounds, etc.) in the theater field.” The student was employed in the Office of International Admissions as a “student assistant” and was supervised by the assistant director of undergraduate international admissions. He transferred from the

California Community College (CCC) System to SFSU in the spring of 2017, so he had been at his FWS job for only three months at the time of the study. He spent about two months searching for a job and was made aware of this position by his advisor. He was working about 11-15 hours per week performing administrative duties. The student completed both the online survey and phone interview.

Student B identified as Asian and was enrolled as a 5th year senior majoring in English and Asian American Studies. The student plans to “get a teaching credential in English and a Master’s in Education at San Francisco State University in hope of becoming a high school English teacher and eventually a community college professor.” The student is employed in the Department of Disability Programs and Resource Center as an “office support assistant” and reports to the office support coordinator. The student found the FWS job on his own using the SFSU online resource for jobs and has been at the job for nine months. He works about 16 - 20 hours per week performing administrative duties. The student completed both the online survey and phone interview.

Student C identified as African-American and was enrolled as a 2nd year sophomore majoring in English and Cinema. The student plans to “write screenplays for movies in the future.” The student is employed in the Department of Graduate Studies as an “office assistant.” The student did not know the title of her direct supervisor. When asked why, the student replied that she had not asked about the title of her supervisor. In spite of this, the student described a supportive relationship with her supervisor. The student found the FWS job on her own using the SFSU online resource for jobs and has

been at the job for 14 months. She works about 11 - 15 hours per week. The student completed both the online survey and phone interview.

Student D identified as Hispanic/Latina and was enrolled as a 4th year senior majoring in communicative disorders and pursuing a double minor in education and special education. The student plans to pursue a career as a speech language pathologist (SLP) and plans to attend graduate school in this field. As an SLP, she plans to “work with children or adults who have a speech and/or language impairment. The target population includes individuals who have suffered from a stroke, traumatic brain injury, aphasia, dysphagia (i.e. swallowing difficulties), among others.” She learned about her major in college. At first she wanted to major in nursing but then decided that it would not be for her. The student is employed in the College of Business as a “student assistant” and reports to the office manager. She found the job through her sister who knew the office manager and connected both of them. She has been in the position for all four of her academic years and works 16 – 20 hours per week doing clerical work that includes making copies, scanning, and answering the phone. Although she has consistently carried this number of hours, she is finding it “more challenging with senior year duties this term.” The student completed both the online survey and phone interview.

Student E identified as African-American and was enrolled as a 1st year freshman majoring in engineering. The student plans to pursue a career in mechanical engineering. The student is employed in the athletics department as a “game day worker” and reports to the game day coordinator. He found the job on his own through the student

employment office. She has been in the position for four months and works 11 – 15 hours per week. She is responsible for “keeping the game moving.” The student completed only the online survey.

Findings

The findings were often in line with previous research findings but also provided insights into how the program operates at one specific institution—SFSU. The study highlights three general findings about the FWS program at SFSU: 1) most students found their FWS jobs on their own or through personal contacts but not the student employment office, 2) the program is serving high-need students, and 3) most jobs tend to be administrative or clerical positions. Additionally, responses to the Likert-scale were classified into the four key areas of student employment discussed in the literature review section of this paper: Astin’s Theory of Involvement and persistence, job congruence and satisfaction, impact on career decision-making, and the role of the student employment supervisor.

General Findings

To start with, all students participating reported finding their federal work-study job independently through online searches or personal contacts. There was no coordination between student employment and the student to help identify jobs that are congruent to the student’s academic or career interests. This supports Scott-Clayton’s point that the federal work-study program does not match students with meaningful employment opportunities that are connected to their interests in spite of language in the

federal program that “to the maximum extent practicable, a school must provide FWS jobs that complement and reinforce each recipient’s educational program or career goals,” (Federal Student Aid Handbook, 2012). This is an important point to highlight because these connections to meaningful student employment on campus set the stage for the student’s personal, social, academic, and career decision-making success during and after college, according to research. However, the study also found that in spite of not being congruent, students found their jobs satisfying for other reasons such as flexibility in hours, the ability to do homework, not too challenging, etc., which must be understood in the context of the immediate versus long-term needs of the student.

Another important point to highlight is that all students who participated in the study were high-need students. This was done intentionally to ensure that the study reflected the spirit of the federal work-study program in terms of serving students with “great” financial need. A third important point to highlight is that all students reported having administrative jobs that focus on basic clerical skills such as answering phones, greeting guests, running errands, copying, scanning, front desk duties, delivering mail, and the list goes on. This supported the claim by Scott-Clayton that federal work-study jobs are generally low-skill positions that are not connected to the student’s personal or career interests. The findings for each of the four key areas of student employment identified through the literature review for this study are described below:

Involvement and Persistence

On the question of whether or not a student feels more connected to the college

community as a result of having a federal work-study job on campus, four students strongly agreed with one student agreeing. This touches on Astin's Theory of Involvement that the more involved the student is on a college campus, the more connected they feel. One student reported that "working on campus helped him understand more about SFSU and San Francisco, especially understanding the international population and why they choose to come study at SFSU."

Another student reported becoming "more aware of students with disabilities to whom he was blind before" his federal work-study job in the Disability Programs and Resource Center. One student reported that he felt more connected to the campus community as result of meeting members of the community while delivering mail. Although some of these connections to the campus community may appear to be tangential, all students valued professional interactions at their FWS sites that allowed them to connect to the community outside of the FWS site. A casual greeting on campus for one student provided a meaningful connection to the overall community.

Although a correlation between student employment and persistence cannot be drawn from this study as the study was not a longitudinal analysis and looked at students over a short window of time, all students agreed, with one student strongly agreeing, that student employment helped them be more successful in their academic goals. This is in part evident in the fact that three students self-reported a cumulative GPA of B and two reported cumulative GPA of A. One student reported feeling more comfortable talking with professors as a result of interacting with professionals at the job placement, while

another student reported learning new skills and knowledge, including time management and other professional skills, that she has been able to apply to her studies. This supported Kulm & Cramer's (2006) findings that working on campus leads to greater success. With 100 percent of students reporting that they found a positive relationship between working on campus and academic success, the study contradicted Van de Water's (1985) findings which reported that only 11 percent of the students surveyed felt that work did not improve their academic performance. The study next looked at job congruence and satisfaction.

Job Congruence and Satisfaction

All students reported that, overall, their student employment job was a positive experience, with four strongly agreeing. Three student participants, however, reported that their campus employment was not a match with their academic or career interests and goals, while two felt that it was a good match. Of the three who reported that it was not a good match, one is a freshman, one a 4th year junior, and one a 5th year senior. Of the two who reported that it was congruent, one is a 2nd year sophomore and another is a 4th year senior. Given the variance in grade levels, the results are mixed based on Larkin's findings that older students have jobs that are more congruent than their younger counterparts who "were more influenced in their decision-making by job location, schedule flexibility, and having friends working there," (Larkin et. al., 2007). It also does not support Kane's (1993) findings that the more congruent the job, the greater satisfaction the student derives from it.

Two of the three students who reported that their jobs were not congruent to their interests and goals in spite of being satisfied, highlighted other benefits that extended beyond job congruence. The study examined individual factors that played a role in students identifying campus employment jobs to better understand why this did not support Kane's and Larkin's correlation between job congruence and satisfaction. Student A reported, "I wanted to have a job on campus and wanted a job that would be flexible with my school schedule." The student also compared the FWS job to jobs he had held off campus and reported that working off campus required longer hours that made balancing work and school stressful. The student described his federal work-study job as, "This job helps me get through college in different ways. I'm able to do school work at work." Student B also reported that "the job that I wanted was something that would allow me to do my work on campus. That was the main purpose." Student E did not participate in the phone interview, so individual factors that played a role in selecting a federal work-study job are not known.

Of the two students who reported that their federal work-study jobs were congruent with their academic and career interests, Student C reported having two jobs on campus. She reported that being "a resident assistant takes up a lot of time. The FWS job helps me with customer service skills, and I would not want it to be more difficult or challenging." This in part explains why the student felt satisfied and why the job, while not directly relevant to the student's career interest, was still a good match in supporting the student through her academic and career goals. It was the right fit for now. However,

when asked what job she would prefer to do, Student C replied that she would prefer to work in the childcare program. Student D reported that she has remained in her position for four years because it is “really convenient for me. I don’t work weekends and my boss has been a great person and great supporter. Now I want to finish this in four years.” Again, while the job is not directly connected to her field of study or career goals in communicative disorders or education, the job has afforded her the flexibility to work and study in order to graduate in four years, not an easy task at SFSU where less than 20 percent of students graduate in four years.

These reflect important insights into the factors that play a role in students identifying student employment opportunities. Sometimes, the short-term goals toward degree completion take precedence over long-term goals beyond college, which could seem not as relevant in the student’s present state. The finding here is evidence that job congruency is not always the dominant factor in student employment decisions and job satisfaction. Based on each individual student case study, these factors are personal to each student and likely are based on where they are in their lives, education, and career planning. While congruent jobs are valuable experiences, the timing of these jobs may play a critical role on whether or not the student benefits and derives satisfaction from student employment. To support students in their career maturation, attention should be paid to how student employment supports the student’s career decision-making.

Career Decision-Making

In this section, the study captured evidence of how federal work-study jobs help

students develop better career decision-making skills. All five students agreed that their federal work-study jobs allowed them to be more successful in their career goals, and three strongly agreed while two agreed that they learned new skills and gained new knowledge that will help them professionally. Student D was asked how the job had supported her in her career decision-making and the student replied, "If I make it into this field, I would also be doing clerical work."

The student seems to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of both basic and complex skills required in the field of speech pathology, which handles sensitive patient information. Making the connection between processes in the college of business to processes in her field implies career maturity and evidence of career decision-making skills through her FWS job. Student C highlighted her customer service and professionalism skills that she developed through her federal work-study employment as providing her with a basis for career development.

Other students highlighted networking opportunities in the development of their career decision-making. Student D established a supportive connection with the assistant dean who became a mentor figure for her. She offered to serve as a recommender or reference and to review the student's resume. According to the student, "she feels comfortable talking to her." Student C had the opportunity to network with workers in the theater art department and education department, both related to her intended majors. Student B, however, indicated that he had not met professionals in the field through his federal work-study employment but had made several connections through his work at a

local youth-serving organization in San Francisco's Mission District and still felt supported by his supervisor and colleagues at his FWS site. The study also looked at the role of the student employment supervisor in creating these meaningful experiences for students.

The Role of the Student Employment Supervisor

Noel (1993) put forth evidence that the student employment supervisor has a unique and important role to play in ensuring that students derive a meaningful and positive experience from their student employment on campus. All students reported that they felt treated like a professional at their FWS site and had a designated workstation that allowed them to do their work. However, most students reported not being challenged at their FWS jobs. This is in part due to the fact that all students are engaged in low-skill jobs. Two students, however, reported that they were not looking for a challenging jobs and most students reported that factors such as flexibility, convenience, etc. played a role in their decision on the type of job to acquire.

Overall, all students strongly agreed with one student only agreeing that they looked to their supervisor as a mentor. When asked if they felt supported by their supervisor and colleagues at their student employment site, all five students strongly agreed. When asked if they discussed their academic or career plans with their supervisor at least once a month, however, one student strongly disagreed, two students disagreed, and only two students agreed. However, on the phone interview, the students who disagreed reported that while they may not directly discuss their academic or career plans

with their supervisor on a monthly basis, the supervisor is supportive in other areas such as scheduling and emotionally checking in on them.

Student A reported that his supervisor “has been supportive and encouraging, always works with [him] around [his] schedule, and supports [him] in my academics.” The student also reported that the supervisor provided him with training when he first started at his federal work-study job. He reported feeling “comfortable after the training to do my job.” He also receives periodic feedback from his supervisor. Student B reported that his supervisor has introduced him to new knowledge about working with students with disabilities. Although they do not discuss academic or career plans on a regular basis, he views her as a mentor. The student is also part of weekly staff meetings to discuss “how to improve interactions with students who come into the office and how to work with them better.” Everyone, including the student is heard. This has been a professionally invaluable experience for the student as it has given him awareness of people with disabilities and has taught him how to interact with them. Student C reported that her supervisor is very supportive and “always checking in on [her] to see how [she’s] doing.” She felt supported by both her supervisor and colleagues at her FWS site. Overall, these students reported having supportive student employment supervisors who play an important role in the student’s employment experience and emotional development.

Chapter 5

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study examined the impact of the federal work-study (FWS) program on student persistence and career decision-making at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and looked at five individual student case studies as part of SFSU as the institutional case study. Through an online survey and phone interviews, information about each student's FWS experience at SFSU was captured. All five students reported having an overall positive FWS experience. The program also seems to be serving high-need students as all students were Pell-eligible and first-generation in college. All students also reported feeling supported by their supervisors and colleagues at their FWS site. Overall, the FWS program seems to be having a positive impact on students at SFSU.

Based on the data, the FWS program is helping students make stronger connections to the campus community and is positively impacting students both academically and in their career decision-making. Additionally, supervisors seem to be playing a positive role in the lives of students. All students felt more connected to the campus community at SFSU as a result of having a FWS job on campus. One student reported becoming aware of students with disabilities through his student employment, another student felt that he understood the SFSU and San Francisco communities better as a result of interacting with people at his placement, and another student felt more connected to the international student community through his placement. These are all

positive experiences that support that the program is working in terms of helping students feel more connected to the campus community, an important factor in college persistence.

Federal work-study (FWS) jobs at SFSU seem to align with the national trend on the average type of job that students can access. All students reported that the FWS jobs in which they are engaged are low-skill clerical or administrative. In spite of the positions being mostly clerical and administrative, however, students found value in these experiences through professional and student interactions. They also valued the learning that the jobs offered. One student reported gaining a better understanding of students with disabilities and another student recognized the value of understanding professional record-keeping systems to prepare her for her career in communicative disorders. This is evidence that even low-skill jobs can provide the student with valuable learning opportunities.

Additionally, the study shed some light on the fact that students are not always interested in having challenging jobs that will help them prepare for their careers after college. Some students reported that the main factors that played a role in procuring student employment were flexibility, ability to do homework, convenience, etc. rather than looking for employment that would help them prepare for life after college. One student was working two jobs and wanted to keep her FWS job simple and stress free. This is an important finding that requires further examination in promoting job congruency for FWS positions. It requires understanding the immediate and long-term

needs of students and not assuming that because something may be beneficial long-term for students, that it is also a short-term benefit.

Student employment supervisors are also a pillar of support for students. In spite of most students reporting that they do not discuss their academic or career goals with their supervisor, all students reported feeling supported by their supervisors and colleagues at their FWS job site. Students reported that their supervisors checked in on them to see how they are doing on a regular basis and provided opportunities for learning. This is an important role that student employment supervisors at SFSU are playing in terms of supporting and encouraging students. The fact that students do not discuss their academic or career plans with their supervisors does not seem to have a negative impact on the positive relationship between students and supervisors.

Another important conclusion from this study is that while there are benefits to making FWS jobs more meaningful by aligning them to the student's academic or career goals, training supervisors, etc., these goals do not always align with the immediate needs of students and ignore meaningful learning that is taking place and the strong connections that students are making to the campus community through their FWS jobs. The voice of the student also needs to be factored in to better understand what students need in the short-term versus the long-term. It is important that any redesign of the FWS program focus on meeting both the immediate and the long-term needs of the student.

Discussion

While this study was limited to one institutional case study compared to Kulm & Cramer's 2006 study that highlighted 12 institutions, the study still provides valuable information about the impact of student employment on involvement and persistence, job congruency and satisfaction, career decision-making, and the role of student employment supervisors. The study supported Kulm and Cramer's 2006 findings that "employment and persistence toward a degree were positively correlated," (p. 931). Unlike Van de Water's study that compared students in government funded work-study to students in non government funded work-study and students not working, this study was limited to a sample of only students participating in the federal work-study (FWS) program at SFSU. The study focused on the benefits of the federal work-study program per se and, as such, only looked at students participating in the program.

Additionally, while Larkin (2007) revisited Kane's findings 15 years later, this study examined both Larkin's and Kane's (1992) findings 26 years after Kane's first made the connection between job congruence and satisfaction. This study did not support these findings but did support Kane's findings that satisfaction is not always based on job congruency. Personal and individual, short- and long-term factors play a role in the student's employment decision-making. It is important to note that both Kane and Larkin sampled a more diverse and larger population of students—1438 and 539, respectively.

The study also did not support Larkin's findings that older students usually hold jobs that are more congruent to their interests than their younger counterparts who base

job opportunities on flexibility, convenience, and other personal factors. Students in this study expressed preference for factors beyond congruence and age was not a factor. Students B and D, both seniors, both highlighted these factors in identifying student employment opportunities. Reasons highlighted were graduating in four years, needing a place to do homework while working, and other reasons that pertained more to short-term goals than long-term goals.

Recommendations

The first recommendation is for the federal and state governments and institutions to fund new research to better understand the federal work-study program and its implementation across different states and colleges and universities. "As vocational psychologists and student affairs professionals have repeatedly suggested (Goldstein & High, 1992; Greenhaus, Hawkins, & Brenner, 1983; Healy & Mourton, 1987; Kane et al., 1982), substantially more attention needs to be directed toward college student employment and an evaluation of its career decision-making benefits," (Luzzo, p. 29). Research in the area of college student employment has been lacking. I propose longitudinally tracking both students who participate and students who do not participate in campus student employment for a more in-depth understanding of how the program benefits students and, more specifically, how it propels first-generation and high-need students of color into successful college completion and fulfilling career pathways after college. The federal and state governments and institutions, as stewards of the program,

have a responsibility to ensure that tax payer dollars are being effectively spent and, as such, are accountable for researching the impact of the federal work-study program.

The second recommendation is to address the context in which campus employment opportunities exist and function in the student's first-year of college. "Student employment programs today operate in a context of conditions and values which can negatively affect their quality," (Little & Chin, p. 105). Because college freshmen are often inaccurately perceived as not possessing professional skills, tasks assigned to students in their federal work-study placements are often not challenging and restrict the students' professional development. "The cultural perception of the student as an incompetent worker becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," (Little & Chin, p. 107). The context in which jobs exist has to be redefined to inspire students to grow professionally and to further the institution's mission by challenging students with more meaningful responsibilities. Research shows that "many on-campus jobs do not provide a challenge to student abilities and interests. Filing, typing, mimeographing, collating, and stapling are necessary but hardly inspirational activities," (Little & Chin, p. 110). Additionally, because college students are often considered secondary labor on campus—they are first seen as students and then employees—providing a healthy work environment is not viewed as a necessity for college student employees. "Although environmental conditions in most on-campus positions do not compromise safety, they are often overlooked as a source of student motivation. Adequate light, ventilation, minimal noise levels, desk space, and a place for personal possessions are taken for granted for regular employees,"

(Little & Chin, p. 110). Reform of the program must begin by challenging the long-held historical and institutional perceptions of college students, particularly in their freshman year, as incapable employees in order to provide them with meaningful, challenging, and inspiring campus employment opportunities.

The third recommendation that this study puts forth is to provide a framework for a professional development program for student employment professionals to be effective mentors to federal work-study students and to address the context in which student employment opportunities exist and operate. Student employment supervisors are in a position to play a more active and intentional role in mentoring and guiding work-study students through college completion and preparing them for a successful career pathway after college. “Campus work supervisors are ideally positioned to be highly effective *retention agents* for students who work with them. In fact, students often say it is their work supervisor who knows them best—better than any teacher or advisor on campus...For many students this relationship prominently figures in their decision to return to campus each fall,” (Noel, p. 32). Additionally, “they are in a position to ensure that students participate in a high-quality work-experience,” (Noel, p. 33).

For the proposed reforms to the federal work-study program to be effective, student employment supervisors need support in redesigning the context in which federal work-study opportunities exist and function to benefit the student. “For supervisors to provide for the exercise of intellectual curiosity in making connections between the student’s work and the products of the work is the mark of a professional,” (Little &

Chin, p. 111). They will require training in viewing college students as invaluable employees with intellectual curiosity and ambition to be challenged and ensuring “that the institution receives real value for the resources it invests in student employment,” (Noel, p. 33). Student employment professionals are in direct contact with college work-study students and have an important role in implementing reforms to the program.

The fourth and final recommendation is for institutions to establish a protocol for communication and sharing of student information across different campus departments—admissions, financial aid, student employment, and career offices—in order to establish a campus wide focus in implementing reforms to the federal work-study program. “Improving retention requires an institution wide focus, and the student employment professional, along with the financial aid professional, are emerging partners in ensuring student success and persistence on campus,” (Noel, p. 34). These campus offices typically work in silos with little sharing of student information across departments and with each department storing critical student information that is not shared with other campus professionals in direct contact with students and with the opportunity to significantly impact the student’s college and career trajectory.

References

- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development* 25: 297–308.
- College Completion (2013). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=CA§or=public_four.
- The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, *United States Statutes at Large*, volume 78. Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1965. 508-516.
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2015). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 3-24.
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Retrieved from: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>.
- Gault, J., Leach, E., & Duey, M. (2010). Effects of Business Internships on Job Marketability: The Employers' Perspective. *Education & Training*, 52(1), 76-88.
- Gladieux, L.E., (1995). Financing Postsecondary Education: The Federal Role. *Federal Student Aid Policy: A History and an Assessment*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/FinPostSecEd/gladieux.html>.
- The glossary for education reform. Retrieved from: <https://www.edglossary.org/>.
- Johnson, H., Mejia, M. C., & Bohn, S. (2015). Will California run out of college graduates? Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from: http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1015HJR.pdf.
- Hanks, A., Solomon, D., & Weller, C. (2018). Systematic inequality: how America's structural racism helped create the black-white wealth gap. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2018/02/21/447051/systematic-inequality/>.
- Kane, S. T., Healy, C. C., & Henson, J. (1992). College students and their part-time jobs: job congruency, satisfaction, and quality. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 29, 138-144.
- Kincaid, R. (1995). Working through college. *Linking College and the Workplace*, 3-8.

- Kulm, T. L. & Cramer, S. (2006). The relationship of student employment to student role, family relationships, social interactions and persistence. *College Student Journal*, 40(4), 927-938.
- Larkin, J. E., LaPort, K. A., & Pines, H. A. (2007). Job choice and career relevance for today's college students. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 44, 86-94.
- Little, T. & Chin, N., (1995). The context of student employment. *Linking College and the Workplace*, 104-121.
- Luzzo, D. A., (1995). Career decision-making benefits of college student employment. *Linking College and the Workplace*, 25-30.
- Martinez, E. F., Bilges, D. C., Shabazz, S. T., Miller, R., & Morote, E. S. (2012). To work or not to work: student employment, resiliency, and institutional engagement of lowIncome, first-generation college students. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 42(1), 27-39.
- Merisotis, J. (2011). Work-study is about work and study. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-merisotis/workstudy-is-about-work-a_b_969017.html.
- Noel, L. (1995). The student employment professional: an emerging partner in student success. *Linking College and the Workplace*, 30-39.
- Peterson, S. L., (1993). A career decision-making self-efficacy and institutional integration of underprepared college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 34(6), 659-685.
- Rigsby, J. T., Addy, N., Herring, C., & Polledo, D., (2013). An examination of internships and job opportunities. *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, 29(4), 1131-1144.
- Scott-Clayton, (2011). *A Job Program in Need of Reform*. New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/09/a-jobs-program-in-need-of-reform/>.
- Smith, A. (2015). Who's in first (generation)? *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/10/who-are-first-generation-students-and-how-do-they-fare>.

- Snapshot Report (2017). Persistence-Retention. *National Student Clearinghouse Research Center*. Retrieved from: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistenceretention18/>.
- Watanabe, L. E. & Jasinki, J. (2005). The effects of college student employment on academic achievement. *Undergraduate Research Journal*, 1, 38-47.
- Wilkie, C. & Jones, M. (1996). Academic benefits of on-campus employment to first-year developmental education students. *Linking College and the Workplace*, 79-89.
- Wyrick, J. (2014). Persistence v. Retention. *Pearson*. Retrieved from <http://www.pearsoned.com/education-blog/persistence-vs-retention/>.

APPENDIX A: PERSONAL FWS EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**(Online Survey administered through Survey Monkey)**General Information

Student First and Last Names:

Year in College:

- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th
- 5th
- 6th or more

Major(s):

Career Objective/Field (text box and limit number of characters):

FWS Placement Information (*Students will be allowed to complete up to five positions*)

FWS Placement Department:

Name of Supervisor:

Title of Supervisor:

Start Date Mo/Yr:

End Date Mo/Yr:

Your Title:

How did you obtain the position?

- Assigned
- Student employment office
- Word of mouth
- On my own
- Other: _____

Key Role/Responsibilities:

Please rate each of the following items based on your personal experience. Rate using a scale of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

- Overall, my on-campus employment was a positive experience.
- I looked to my supervisor as my mentor.
- My supervisor and I discussed my academic and career plans at least once or more each month.
- My on-campus employment placement has helped me be more successful in my academic goals.
- My on-campus employment placement is/was the right match with my career and academic interests and goals.
- I felt challenged at my placement.
- I felt supported by my supervisor and colleagues at my placement.
- I made networking professional connections at or through my placement who are in my chosen career interest or field.
- Overall, I feel that I learned new skills and gained new knowledge at my placement that will help me professionally.
- I was treated as a professional at my placement.
- I had a designated (even if shared) workstation.
- I learned a lot about how to behave in a professional environment from my placement.
- I feel more connected to my college community as a result of my on-campus job placement.
- My on-campus job placement was not at all a match with my career and academic interests and goals.
- My on-campus employment has led me to explore new and interesting career options.

APPENDIX B: PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: My name is Mario De Anda. I am a graduate student in the Master's of Education, Equity and Social Justice program here at SFSU. The purpose of this research is to understand how the federal work-study program plays a role in supporting first-generation college students of color through college persistence and career decision-making.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about how the federal work-study program has personally affected you in your academic and career goals. You are asked to share only information that you are comfortable disclosing and you may terminate the interview at any point during our conversation.

Do you have questions before we begin?

1. Overall, how has your FWS placement prepared you for your academic and career goals?
2. What did you learn during your FWS placement in general?
3. How has your FWS experience(s) aligned to your academic and career objectives? Why?
4. Did you have a mentor/supervisor at your FWS placement? If so, what kind of support did they provide you? Did you seek them out or did they seek you out?
5. Did you discuss your personal, academic, or career goals with your FWS placement supervisor? How often (e.g. once a week, once a month, at least once during the term, etc.)? How was this helpful?
6. How has the FWS experience(s) helped you to be successful in your academic studies and career goals? In what other ways has your FWS experience helped you?
7. Do you think that you were treated as a professional at your FWS placement? What type of training did you receive at the start of your placement? Do you feel that you were challenged? Did you participate in staff meetings? Do you feel that you were trusted with completing the work? Were the tasks assigned challenging? Did you receive a performance review and, if so, please describe the process? Did you receive an exit interview upon leaving your placement at the end of the term, and, if so, please describe the process?
8. What work accommodations did you receive? Did you have your own designated work area? Were the conditions of the place conducive to allowing you to complete your tasks on time or effectively or did they pose challenges? Please clarify.

9. How do you feel (e.g. comfortable, clear, anxious/nervous, confused, lost, etc.) when asked about your career plans? Do you feel confident about where you see yourself after college?
10. Have you participated in an internship program or job outside of SFSU during college or high school? How does this experience compare to your FWS placement(s) at SFSU? How did you secure the internship or job? How did your supervisor support you?
11. What general academic and career support services have you received at SFSU? How did you learn about these services (e.g. word of mouth, online, advisor, mentor, supervisor, etc.)? How have they helped you?
12. What recommendations do you have for improving the FWS program in general or at SFSU?
13. Do you still keep in touch with your supervisor? Please describe your current relationship with your supervisor.
14. A simple definition of social capital is: the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Do you feel that your social capital has improved as a result of your FWS experiences? Please explain.
15. Would you recommend your placement(s) to other students? Why?

Closing: Thank you for your time for sharing your personal experiences. Do you have questions at this time?