

October 25, 2019

To: Faculty and Staff

From: Steve Briggs

Re: Renewing the *LifeWorks* program

Challenge: How do we recalibrate our student work system to ensure that work positions are meaningful both for students and the college, offering an improved rate of pay for students without funding it through tuition increases?

Recommendation: The goal in general terms is to increase the rate of student pay by 25% while trimming the number of hours worked by 25%. Students will be able to earn the same amount of total pay while working fewer hours.

The Context

Student work has been an integral part of campus life since Berry's founding. The recent renaming of this program as *LifeWorks* reinforces its educational value and the lessons learned through "worthwhile work well done."

Successful employees in a rapidly evolving economy need to be agile and self-motivated learners who take initiative, find a way to complete challenging projects, work well with a team, provide good customer service, communicate complex ideas clearly, and see the big picture. Our role in mentoring students and assisting in shaping their personal and professional development has never been more important.

Drawing attention to *LifeWorks* means that it is also time to review and renew its core operating principles. As a starting point for discussion, consider the following principles:

1. Campus work must be meaningful both for the student and the college.
2. Entry level positions should emphasize responsible work habits (such as dependability, commitment and attention to detail) even when the work is less than exciting.
3. Advanced levels of work should require more skills and thus advanced training. This professional development / training is an appropriate use of time at work.
4. Students should receive appropriate compensation for their work.
5. The *LifeWorks* program should complement and extend (but not interfere with) the learning that occurs in the academic program.

Adjustments are needed for us to better realize these principles. In some areas, positions have accumulated over time that do not fully require a student's attention and do not provide meaningful learning experiences. In other instances, we need to provide more clarity about and preparation for increasing levels of responsibility.

At the same time, we recognize that the rate of pay for student positions at Berry lags behind the local market, and a change in the federal minimum wage is on the horizon. Thus, we need to recalibrate our system so that we offer the needed number of hours overall at the correct levels of responsibility and a fair rate of pay.

The *LifeWorks* system is complex: more than 1,800 students work across several hundred units and produce 500,000 hours of work during each academic year and another 200,000 in the summer. This part of our educational mission is funded by \$5.4 million dollars in the college operating budget. Additional positions are funded through partnerships with local business and organizations, and we will have 50-75 new opportunities for student employment with the opening of The Spires in 2020 and a hotel anticipated in 2021.

Recalibrating the system means increasing the rate of student pay while concurrently ensuring that *LifeWorks* positions contribute meaningfully to the campus community. The goal in general terms is to increase the rate of pay by 25% while trimming the number of hours worked by 25%. Thus, the rate of student pay will increase but without an increase in the overall student work budget line since it is equally important to keep tuition increases to a minimum. The net result will be that students can receive the same amount of total pay while working fewer hours.

How can we move forward to this end?

- Our goal is to raise the minimum wage to \$9.00 an hour at the start of the 2020-21 academic year.
- Each vice president will work toward a 20% reduction in the numbers of hours of student work in their division. This is not an across the board reduction at the department level but will require a careful review of positions and the priorities in each area to shape decisions in ways that best serve students and the college.
- In general, we will expect to reduce the number of hours a student can work to 10 hours per week for first year students and 12 for all others. Hours for Gate of Opportunity Students will be adjusted accordingly.
- Each work position will be evaluated as to whether it is meaningful for both the student and the college. Our expectation is that students are working when they are at work. Supervisors should use times that are less busy to engage students in training and development, with an eye toward external certifications.
- The Center for Personal and Professional Development will work with offices and units to develop appropriate training procedures. (For example, LinkedIn Learning serves as an excellent resource.)
- We will work with The Spires, the hotel and other off-campus partners to provide work positions for our students that are meaningful while offsetting the cost to our student work budget.

Given the magnitude of this effort, we ask that you give it time and attention now to prepare for next year. Many of you will begin your selection processes for student workers in January and will need to have a plan reviewed and approved by your vice president by early next semester. Your vice president has data that includes all of the positions, levels and rate of pay, and total number of hours for each department from last year (2018-2019), and will work with you in your planning. Debbie Heida, chief of staff, will coordinate this effort across the college.

Our new Dean of Personal and Professional Development, Marc Hunsaker, begins his work with us on October 28th. He and his team are prepared to guide and support you as you plan for these transitions in our *LifeWorks* program.