

Ian Strasma

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Wolgast

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), around 40% of undergraduate students in America also work at a part-time job during the school year. But this statistic doesn't speak to the wide variety of experiences that student employees can have while enrolled at the University of Kansas. Since Lawrence is a college town, there are a wide variety of jobs that students can be employed at, such as working on campus, at a local business, at a corporate chain, or by doing any type of non-traditional job. Either way, student employees are in the unique position of juggling part-time employment while pursuing an education full-time.

Lauren Wolf, a senior majoring in chemical engineering, works at a job on campus as a lab assistant for the Institute of Bioengineering Research Lab. Students finding work at school is very common, and unsurprising given that [KU is the largest employer in Lawrence](#). According to Wolf, the benefits of working on campus, besides potentially finding a job that is relevant to your degree, are mostly being able to work during the gaps between your classes. But working on campus can also provide a sense of structure throughout the school day. "It's honestly helped me be more productive throughout my day," said Wolf. "It gets me out of bed, it gets me moving, it fills my breaks with something productive rather than just sitting around on my phone or doing nothing."

Lucas Akers, a sophomore majoring in geology, has a different perspective on how part-time employment can be beneficial for an undergraduate student. Akers works at J. Wilson's, a local restaurant in Lawrence, and he believes the separation from the world of academia is one of the benefits of pursuing employment as a student. "Cathartic isn't the right word, but it's kind of a de-stressing experience for me, just because it puts my brain on something else and on a different track. Plus, I really do enjoy my job," said Akers.

This isn't to say that employment while pursuing higher education doesn't come without challenges. Despite his enjoyment of his job, Akers also expressed how having to work can get in the way of his obligations for school – specifically working on homework. “After a shift, I'm just emotionally and mentally wiped out. I'm not going to be in a good state to do homework or any really like deeply intensive work,” said Akers.

Meaghyn DeValk, also a senior majoring in chemical engineering, used to face a similar conundrum when working as a freshman. “I definitely let school fall behind because I was so worried about money and like being able to even go to school,” said DeValk.

DeValk is in a unique position, as she currently works three separate jobs this semester. To counterbalance working as a manager at Jefferson's, a volleyball coach, and a personal assistant to a YouTuber, DeValk is taking less than the standard 15 credit hours. But when there are any conflicts between school and work, she has noted that her bosses tend to be more understanding than her professors. “In Lawrence, I think being upfront with all three of my bosses that I am a student first has been really helpful because they're very accommodating about my schedule,” said DeValk. “But as senior chemical engineers we only have one class a day, so I wish there was some way to put in our schedule and that classes could be scheduled earlier in the morning or later at night based off of that.”

The fact that professors tend to be unable to consider the difficulties that student employees face with their scheduling and workload was that main complaint that the student employees had, but there isn't much hope that this attitude will change. “It would be nice if there were more accommodations, like for occasionally having to miss class or something,” said Akers. “But honestly, I don't really expect that. I'm perfectly OK with it being my responsibility to juggle and manage the two.”

Despite needing the part-time employment to remain financially stable, Wolf, Akers, and DeValk all agreed that they wouldn't stop working if money no longer was an issue. “I

recommend everyone gets a job. Even if it's a campus job or whatever you want to do. It gives you a break, but it also helps you develop more skills to graduate," said DeValk.