

Labor Program BEREA STUDENTS AT WORK

Berea College

To provide for all students through the labor program experiences for learning and serving in community, and to demonstrate that labor, mental and manual, has dignity as well as utility."

Berea College
Great Commitments

Did you know...

- All Berea students have been required to work since the 1880s.
- Berea is one of only six colleges in the country where work is required throughout enrollment.
- Every Berea student is required to work at least 10 hours per week in an assigned labor position.
- Students work an average 12 hours per week. The average number of hours increases with class year.
- There are more than 130 Labor departments in these categories:
 - Essential Services (e.g. groundskeeping)
 - Academic Programs (e.g. teaching assistants)
 - Administration
 - Student Industries (e.g. Boone Tavern)
 - Community Service
- Students are encouraged to seek jobs with increasing responsibility, and some students supervise their peers.
- More than 65% of College staff directly supervise student workers.
- 80% of alumni say labor was their most important college experience.

At Berea, students learn by doing. Consistently rated by alumni as one of the most influential aspects of their education, the Labor Program has taught countless Bereans the **dignity of work** while allowing some to try their hands at potential careers and contribute toward their education.

Students earn modest wages to pay personal expenses, but most important, the Labor Program instills in Berea's students respect and appreciation for a **job well done**, values they can carry with them throughout life.



Patrick McGrady, from Beckley, West Virginia, began his Berea journey without a clear vision of his purpose in life. Assigned to the Bonner Scholars Program his freshman year, he was required to participate in a mission trip to Washington, D.C., to help feed the city's homeless.

Patrick's experience with a service-oriented labor position turned out to be **life altering**. He has branched out into service even more since his trip, this year taking on a position organizing Berea's Micah 6 program, which provides transportation and companionship for Berea residents who do not drive.

Now one of the most active service leaders on campus, Patrick is a sociology major and plans to spend a few years in service following graduation. He hopes to attend a doctoral program so he can teach on the college level and pass on to others his **commitment to service**.

"I have re-evaluated my motives for coming to college and realized that it is not about the money, but more about the difference I can make," he said. "The Labor Program has encouraged me to explore new paths that led me to change my major and to change my plans for the future. When I leave Berea, I will not only leave with a degree, but with four years of growth and developed work skills."

Growing up on a 500-acre farm with a family that raises nearly all their own food will teach anybody a thing or two.

For agriculture major Maggie Smith, this background set the stage for her Berea Labor Program experiences. Her many responsibilities at her family's farm in Shelby County, Indiana, equipped her well for a Labor Program placement as student manager of the College Greenhouse and Gardens.

Praised as a "standout" by her supervisor, Maggie has **expanded her knowledge** of growing systems, greenhouse management, and vegetable production and has also had the opportunity to learn about **managing others**. For Maggie, the constant business of learning and labor feels good and reminds her of home.

"I'm glad there is the opportunity to work while studying," she said. "In my life before Berea I worked on a daily basis. To be without work that's mentally and physically stimulating would feel very strange."



Victor Obonyo, from Nairobi, Kenya, heard about Berea through a friend who visited the United States. Now a math and computer science major and a member of the soccer team, Victor builds computer databases for faculty and staff as a programmer at the Computer Center.

But the technical aspects of his job are only one facet of what Victor has learned through his labor position. Mastering soft skills, such as **time management**, was perhaps the most difficult part of the Labor Program for him.

Though his supervisor says Victor's only "fault" may be too much dedication to his work, Victor sees his busy campus life—and his time in the Labor Program—as an **investment in his future**.

"My job as a programmer has enabled me to put what I have learned in class into real-life situations," he said, "but the skill I value most is working with others as a team to achieve an objective. I want to carry that with me wherever I go."