



IT'S ABOUT TIME

by Michael von Glahn

Keeping track of student workers' hours can eat up a lot of hours for campus store managers and directors. There are software solutions to help with that, but some perform better than others.

At Western Washington Associated Students Bookstore, Bellingham, WA, Director Ueli Stadler employs about 20 student staff—adding six to 10 more for two to three weeks during rush.

“We seem to be spending a lot of time creating and adjusting their schedules,” he says. The store has made do until now with a “homemade” solution using Excel spreadsheets.

WHEN I WORK

The situation prompted Stadler's customer service supervisor, who's in charge of scheduling students, to start hunting for a scheduling system a year ago,

Campus store leaders discuss policies and procedures for scheduling student workers and the pros and cons of different software platforms that can ease—or complicate—the process.





but the project took longer than expected and ground to a stop. He restarted the search effort this summer and finally opted for When I Work (<https://wheniwork.com/>), which the store is implementing this fall.

Scheduling up to now has mostly been based on past experience, with the customer service supervisor maintaining notes and records from previous rushes and special events. Additionally, the store consults productivity reports from its Prism point-of-sale (POS) system, which provides hourly transaction counts and sales amounts for any date or date range.

“We can run those reports retroactively if we want to see how busy we were during special events in the past,” Stadler notes.

He adds that the store endeavors to set a basic quarterly schedule for each student. However, a flurry of call-outs and schedule-change requests can really complicate scheduling. The store tries to provide the finalized daily/weekly schedules at least two weeks ahead of time.

The customer service supervisor starts with a basic availability schedule from each student and then schedules

them all “with the dual goal of covering the bookstore needs while also making sure that the students get roughly the number of hours they request and that the shifts are fairly distributed among them,” Stadler says. If students want to swap their shifts, they have to run that through the CS supervisor.

“In previous stores that I managed,” Stadler explains, “we expected students to look for other students to cover their shifts when necessary and to just keep us posted. We did this with just a simple email listserv where students would ask for help with their shifts and other students replied. Store management monitored that student worker listserv and only got involved when necessary. My hope is that with starting to utilize a scheduling software that includes a communication tool, we will be able to move more in the direction of allowing/ expecting students to cover shifts for each other without direct involvement of the CS supervisor.”

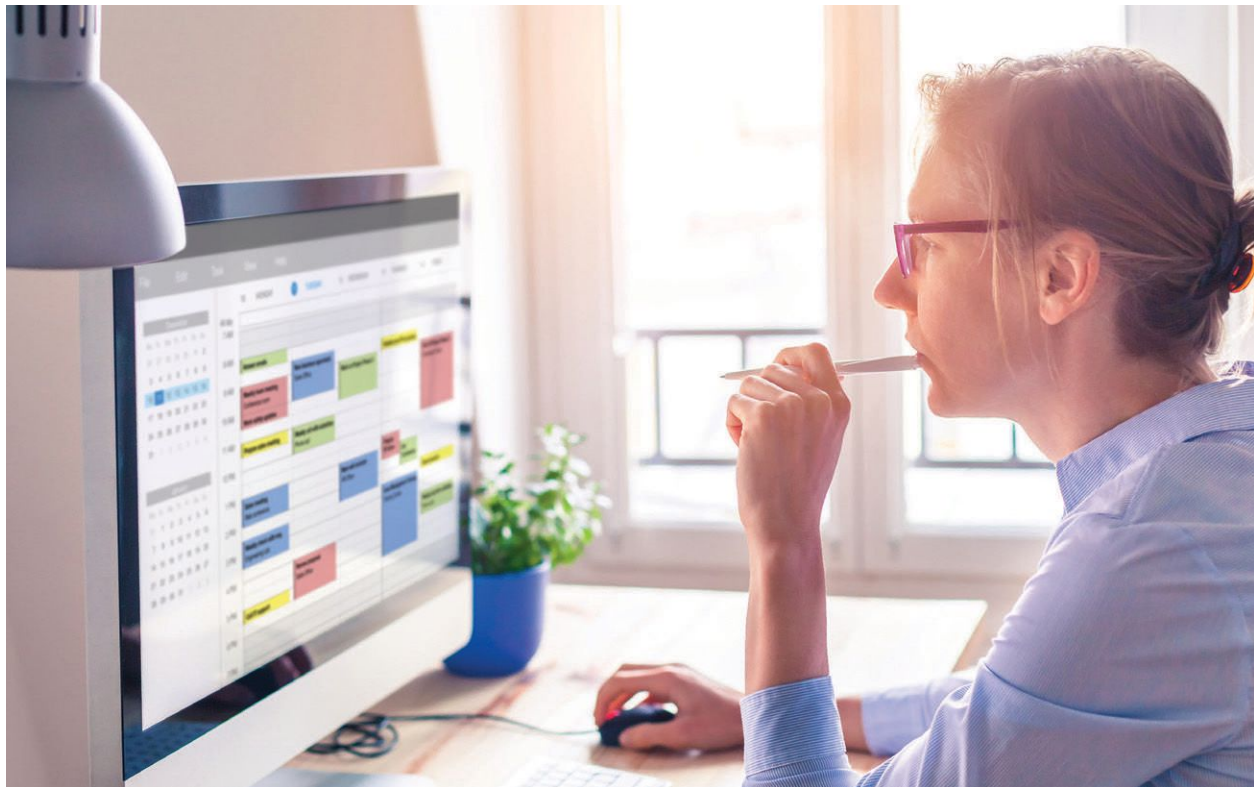
When it comes to students working shifts during midterms or finals, Stadler says, “I am not sure I would use the term ‘required’—maybe ‘strongly encouraged’ or ‘desperately pleaded with’ better describes it. We do need some students

“Obviously, they are students first, so the whole scheduling process can be a delicate dance at times.”

—Ueli Stadler, Western Washington Associated Students Bookstore



The Western Washington Associated Students Bookstore devoted more than a year to researching different student employee scheduling software before making a choice to be implemented this fall.



at all times and usually it is not too hard to cover all necessary shifts. As a matter of fact, we typically have the opposite problem, where more students want to work than we have work for. But there are the specific times of the year—certain holidays, unfortunate finals schedules—when most of them are gone or not available right when we need them. Obviously, they are students first, so the whole scheduling process can be a delicate dance at times.”

Before a campus Microsoft partnership necessitated a switch to Microsoft Teams for Northeast Texas Community College, Mount Pleasant, TX, Director Naomi Taylor Stanford also scheduled her student staffers with When I Work, which she found user-friendly and enjoyable to work with, having many of the same features as Teams, including one that Teams lacks.

“Students could go in and mark the times they were unavailable,” she explains. “For example, when they were in class. They are also able to request time off and to swap shifts with other co-workers. It also has the ability to post open shifts where employees can go in and take them and/or you can go in and later assign them if no one volunteers to take it. It has the ability to copy the same schedule to multiple weeks. This does cost, but I don’t believe it was too expensive.”

WHENTOWORK

“We need student workers all the time,” says Jim Huang, director, The Bookshop at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA. “There are only two grownups running the store, so everything else is done by students. So we try to schedule one or two

students for every minute that we are open. And on Saturdays, the students run the store by themselves.”

Huang uses WhenToWork (<https://whentowork.com/>) to schedule his 15 or so student workers each semester. “It’s not as slick and up to date as some other systems that we’ve considered,” he admits, “but it’s straightforward and (relatively) inexpensive. It’s just scheduling software, not a timeclock; our POS includes a timeclock.”

He’s used WhenToWork the entire nine years he’s been at Bryn Mawr, and before that at his previous gig at Kenyon College Bookstore, Gambier, OH. “I looked around and I played around with a few different systems just to test them out,” he says. “But this is the one that stuck.”

Huang adds that he finds WhenToWork makes it easy for students to post their availability and let him know if they need time off or need to make changes. “It’s really its simplicity that appeals to us,” he says. “I also oversee the mailroom and we’ve used a different software package up there, and it just got to be much more complex for students so we abandoned it.”

Schedules in the store are created on Friday for the coming week, but once students are settled into their classes there tend to be few changes from week to week. If a student does need to miss a shift, they can post that in an automated system for another student to claim, although the change does require approval by Huang or his other full-timer.

Midterms and finals always present a challenge. “Exam week is often very difficult,” Huang says. “So there will sometimes be gaps in the schedule. ... We just do the best we can.”



Last fall the York College Spartan Store stopped stocking textbooks but still employs 30-35 student workers during the academic year for a variety of tasks.

“If they need to drop a shift, WhenToWork lets them put their shift on the board and a notification goes out to other students that a shift is available for pickup.”
—Cindy Leinaweaver,
York College Spartan Store

Huang doesn't get as granular as tracking transactions by hour, but he does look at sales per day and knows by now which days will be busier and which slower. Mondays, for example, are always busy because on top of their usual duties the staff needs to process online orders that came in over the weekend.

The lack of an integrated timeclock, meaning students punch in and out on the POS system, is the one big drawback for Huang. He'd like to be able to match up assignments against actual attendance, but there's no way for WhenToWork and his POS system to talk to each other, so he has to compare that data by hand.

Cindy Leinaweaver, director, York College Spartan Store, York, PA, also reports being happy with WhenToWork. During the school year, her store typically employs 30-35 work-study students. Last fall, the store ceased stocking textbooks.

With hours from 8 a.m.-7 p.m., the store has one student open with a manager (making coffee and filling in the coffee station), three cash registers open throughout the day with a variety of students working two-hour shifts, and one cashier for the evening convenience store until closing. Also, one student assists in receiving for two hours a day and a pair of students per day assist the apparel/marketing manager for two hours each. Students are scheduled weekly.

“We give them some flexibility on scheduling,” Leinaweaver says. “While they don't technically pick their shifts, we ask them what their availability is. If they need to drop a shift,

WhenToWork lets them put their shift on the board and a notification goes out to other students that a shift is available for pickup. Usually our customer service manager monitors and approves this, but we do ask that the student email her about the change.”

The store's POS system tracks sales by time of day, which the store consults to determine staffing levels for weekend events such as open houses or Homecoming.

Leinaweaver says she likes the system allowing her to track time-off requests, group schedule by duty, and its drop/add shift feature. She's less thrilled by a recent unexpected cost increase.

“This year the pricing on WhenToWork went up significantly,” she says. “We looked at other platforms, but found higher pricing and less features. So we have stayed with WhenToWork.”

MICROSOFT TEAMS

At Northeast Bookstore, Northeast Texas Community College, Taylor Stanford uses Microsoft Teams for scheduling. “Mainly because our college has a partnership with Microsoft,” she explains, “so we, the bookstore, don't have to spend anything extra for the schedule feature.”

She also uses it to keep up with schedules and time-off requests for her five full-time/part-time employees.

Among the things Taylor Stanford likes about Microsoft Teams is that when she adds employees to her “Team,” she

not only has the ability to post schedules but there's also a chat feature, so a message posted to the Team goes to everyone instead of her having to send each one the message individually.

"I believe it also has a clock in/out feature," she adds. "I don't use it because we have a different way hourly employees have to clock in, but it could be useful for other stores."

In the Shift module, she creates a Team comprising her workers and creates a schedule that everyone can access on their phone. As a manager she's able to copy a schedule to multiple weeks at a time. The platform offers the ability to request time off, swap shifts, and post open shifts. "The only thing I haven't seen on it is where someone could go in and set their unavailable times."

On a smaller campus, Northeast Bookstore only has about five to eight student workers at a time. Other than during rush, the store tends to be busiest between 8 a.m.-3 p.m., with a surge during the lunch hour, so that's the window when most students are scheduled. "From about 3:30 to 6 p.m. we are pretty slow and will usually only have one student scheduled unless there is an event," she says.

SLING

CSULB Beach Shops, California State University Long Beach, has been scheduling employees with Sling (getsling.com/) for a few years now and Jason Eisenmann, warehouse manager, says that after getting accustomed to it being different from the previous system he likes it.

"The free version had what we needed—scheduling, emailing to staff, an app—when we signed up," he notes. "I think there have been some changes to the free version that we have been grandfathered into, but so far it does what it is supposed to do."

The Beach Shops employs about 300 students throughout the year, spread across three divisions: retail dining, residential dining, and the bookstore. The bookstore alone has about 115-125 student employees, with Eisenmann's warehouse operations having 25-30 of those.

"We used to hire seasonal staff for rush, but we no longer do that," he says. "While COVID restrictions were in place there was some reorganization that reduced our need for temporary staff and we look to have that trend continue as we move to an equitable access textbook model."

"If I have a student repeatedly requesting swaps, I will visit with the student to see if we need to adjust their schedule to better fit their outside commitments."

—Naomi Taylor Stanford, Northeast Bookstore, Northeast Texas Community College

Taylor Stanford generally schedules by the session (NTCC's term is split into several sessions: 16-week, first eight-week, and second eight-week). "Most students will have at least one of the eight-week sessions, so I will usually schedule them out for the whole eight-week session and then their schedule could change for the second eight-week session."

For students who have additional outside employment she'll sometimes have to use a weekly schedule based off their other job's scheduling method. Students don't pick their own shifts, but Taylor Stanford confirms each one's schedule to ensure she didn't miss any class scheduling conflicts or outside commitments.

As long as a shift is covered, students can usually swap without a manager's permission, although Taylor Stanford has to officially approve the swap in Teams for it to update on the schedule.

"Now, if I have a student repeatedly requesting swaps, I will visit with the student to see if we need to adjust their schedule to better fit their outside commitments," she says.

Student workers are scheduled for work during midterms and finals, but their testing schedules are checked beforehand to avoid conflicts. "And I will usually visit with each student to see if they need extra study time and will adjust their schedules," Taylor Stanford says. "Sometimes, we are able to cover these 'cram sessions' with another student worker, but if not I have them submit a time-off request for this study time. Success on their exams is our priority and we work with them accordingly."

To help determine student staffing needs, the store turns to historical data, including a weekly report that compares current year to previous year for sales, register activity reports, and comparisons of web-order sales for years past. "As the retail landscape changes, different weight is being given to those reports," Eisenmann says.

Student workers are scheduled about a week in advance. "I get seasonal availability from students and I regularly get temporary updates for upcoming weeks," explains Eisenmann. They don't pick and choose specific shifts, but assignments are based on their availability. "I also try to take into account times that they are already going to be on campus to minimize them having to make the trip for a work shift."

Student employees are required to work at least 12 hours a week, so do work during midterms and finals. During finals the store typically has extended hours, so it's a little easier for students to be available.

What Eisenmann likes most about Sling is that using it immediately felt intuitive.

"It is easy to get all my new hires into the system with an Excel spreadsheet," he says. "I also really like that it is able to separate staff out based on what jobs they are assigned, so I can see what my e-commerce department is looking like in a group instead of having to look through the entire staff. I am also a fan of being able to access it through the Internet or app instead of being limited to a single computer with an employee file on it."



He adds that Sling's free version recently put a limit on the number of users allowed, a change with which the bookstore is having to deal.

"We weren't looking for an all-in-one staffing application, so having the free version being a simple scheduler worked great for us," Eisenmann says. "The paid version has some reporting functions that would be nice to have, but there are other ways to get that information. I know that there are functions that we don't use, like integration with payroll systems or the ability to be a time-tracking system."

CSULB Beach Shops has tried other systems in the past, so Eisenmann has a basis for comparison. When he first took over scheduling for the warehouse, the bookstore was using Guia International scheduling software (<https://www.workschedules.com/>).

"I really liked the ability to click-and-drag to create shifts as a bar chart as opposed to having to do keyboard entry or manually selecting times," he recalls. "I don't recall there being a way to send schedules to staff from the program, so I'd have to copy the schedule to an email to send it out manually; this may have changed in new versions."

"We switched to Hot Schedules (<https://app.hotschedules.com/>) for a little while. The cost was higher than we were happy with and from what I recall there wasn't much difference with Sling. We've looked at using Shifts in Microsoft Teams, but it was a little clunky to use and during the testing phase I wasn't a fan of how shifts had to be entered and how users were organized."

TIMECLOCK PLUS

Richard Wagner, director, St. Mary's Campus Store, St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's City, has been handling timekeeping with TimeClock Plus (<https://tcpsoftware.com/products/timeclock-plus>) for at least 15 years and is a big fan.

"Man, it's great," he enthuses. "It's just awesome. It takes me like 30 seconds to train students on how to clock in and clock out: Enter your ID number and you clock in. One of the things I use all the time is Who's Here. Like it says, it tells you he's here, he's clocked in; when I'm here first thing in the morning, I had that up a lot of time to make sure." Wagner runs both the store and the convenience store/café next door, so the feature helped him keep tabs on c-store staff. "That's super-helpful," he says.

He generally keeps schedules the same for the whole semester, though there is a coverage policy that says if a student can't make their shift they should try to find someone to cover them and then let Wagner know about it.

The store's POS system provides detailed average sales per hour for each semester for the whole year, and Wagner keys that data into a spreadsheet to review and analyze.

Wagner still has textbooks in the store, but says, "Rush is not rush anymore." He proposed outsourcing course materials a couple years ago to improve the bottom line, but the administration wasn't interested.

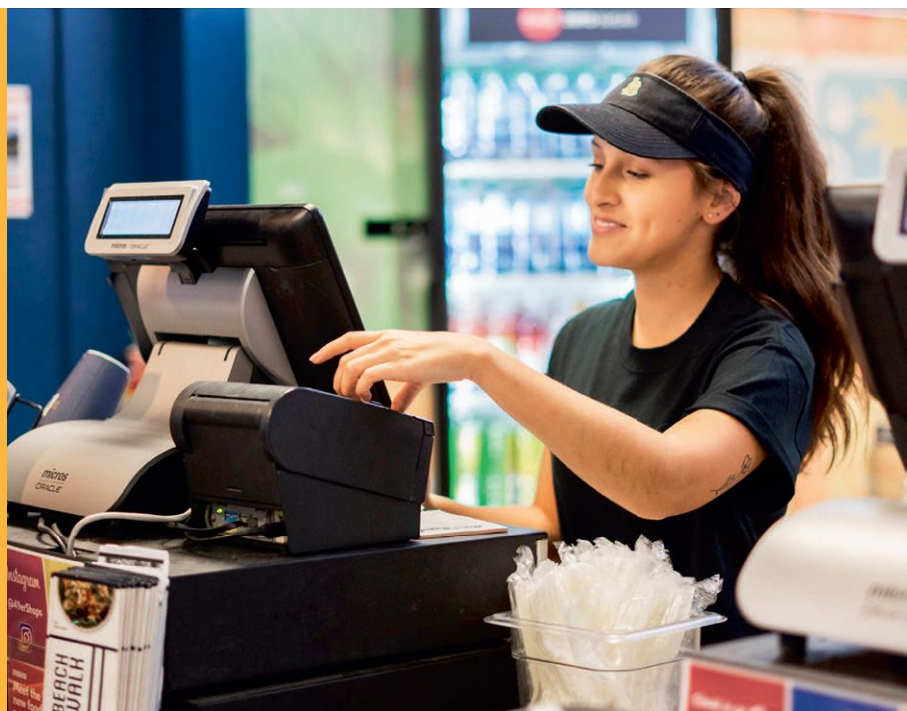
"I've been in a vise," he adds. "Basically, minimum wage here in Maryland has doubled over the last 10 years. Our enrollment's gone down. You know what's happening with textbooks."

Wagner says he feels fortunate to have the café/convenience store, which sells espresso, fresh smoothies, and sparkling drinks. But even that has taken a huge hit since the arrival of a Starbucks two years ago. In addition, St. Mary's athletics rolled out its own online retail site. "They're getting probably 10% or 15% commission on sales, but it's taken away from our sales," he laments.

Despite those woes, TimeClock Plus has always been a bright spot.

"I really like that Sling is able to separate staff out based on what jobs they are assigned, so I can see what my e-commerce department is looking like in a group instead of having to look through the entire staff."

*—Jason Eisenmann,
CSULB Beach Shops*



“Weekly data is rounded up to the nearest 10th hour,” he explains. “One to six minutes equals .1 hour. Payroll information is keyed into a webform feeding Jenzabar, where we can generate instant reports for hours worked and amounts paid. Campus HR then takes summary data for each student and keys it into the state payroll system every two weeks. ... I’ve got probably 35 students and it takes me about an hour to do my whole payroll.”

ANTHOLOGY

Unfortunately for Wagner all that is changing.

Timekeeping at St. Mary’s had been decentralized for each department, with some units, including athletics, still using paper timesheets. Now, all campus units are involved in a transition to a single system: enterprise resource planning (ERP) software from Anthology (www.anthology.com/), formerly known as CampusNexus.

Anthology—which bills itself as a one-stop shop for anything a school needs, from an ERP to a student information system to the Blackboard learning management system—was the low bidder.

Students must now submit individual timesheets. Wagner has to compare each worker’s timesheet to his timeclock data to see if it’s correct. If it’s not, he isn’t allowed to make the fix himself. He has to return the timesheet to the student for correction and resubmission; if past midnight on Sunday, the worker has to resubmit it for the next pay period, so repeated errors could lead to a cascade effect of delayed pay for students who really need their money.

Using the new system Wagner’s hour spent on payroll has ballooned to a day and a half.

Anthology also doesn’t have the best track record on other campuses.

Rogue Community College, Grants Pass, OR, rolled out Anthology’s ERP on its campus in July 2020, but by August the school’s president was issuing a letter of apology to students for the system’s inability to register them for classes, process financial aid and loans, or access records. The college tried to work with Anthology to resolve the issues, but halted the effort that November after the company had failed to fix more than 200 bugs in its system. In April 2022, Rogue CC terminated its relationship with Anthology and received a refund of \$850,000 as part of a settlement.

In September 2022, in Astoria, OR, the Clatsop Community College board voted unanimously in an emergency meeting to authorize the school to obtain \$3 million in financing for new software to replace the recently implemented Anthology ERP system. Unions representing Clatsop CC staff and faculty had submitted votes of no confidence in the software after confronting numerous problems in critical areas including student registration and financial aid.

Anthology is also currently involved in a lawsuit against the Tarrant County College District, a community college system with five physical campuses in the Fort Worth area, over termination of a contract for implementation of its ERP software.

Wagner says staff on his campus have been training and practicing on the Anthology software for a full year already



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—Richard Wagner, St. Mary’s Campus Store, St. Mary’s College of Maryland

while still maintaining their old systems. The ERP was in use this past summer, but only about 10% of St. Mary’s student workforce was on hand at the time. The real test will come when all 1,500 students—half of whom have some kind of job on campus—are back in the fall. Instead of relying on input from 30 or so supervisors, the new system will hinge on those leaders plus consistent and correct input from all 700-odd student workers.

But the administration says they’re committed to Anthology and are going to make it work.

Time will tell. **CS**

Michael von Glahn is a freelance writer in Berea, OH.