

## **DePaul's Education and Development Grant for Employability (EDGE) Program**

### ***Program Summary***

DePaul's Education and Development Grant for Employability (EDGE) Program offers eligible first-year students with an experience that provides career and job skill development in a team setting within a campus department. The program also offers DePaul staff the opportunity to mentor first-year students.

Although this program does not replace student employment, participants gain many of the same benefits: skills for future employability, stronger connections and relationships within DePaul, and support in their academic pursuits. The program also serves as an enrollment yield strategy by using institutional financial aid and a retention effort intended to contribute to student success.

Now in its fourth year, the program has helped 467 students. Research shows that retention rates for EDGE participants are at or above the DePaul average, with 93 percent of the 2011-12 cohort, 85 percent of the 2012-13 cohort, and 88 percent of the 2013-14 cohort persisting to their sophomore year. And participant survey results reveal that EDGE students are able to confidently identify work-based strengths, describe strategies to manage college costs, describe how they have contributed to the DePaul community, and identify employment goals and next steps for the future. Most notable is that the program has been successful in its goal to give students an "edge" in finding paid employment in their second year.

### **Background**

The EDGE Program was developed in fall 2011 to respond to the growing need to provide job skill development opportunities for first-year students who arrive at DePaul with little to no employment experience. Although the university employs thousands of students each year, the majority of these student employee positions require students who have more advanced employment skills and are therefore typically filled by upperclassmen. When the EDGE program was launched in 2011-12, only 20 percent of available student employee positions required little to no work experience ("entry level"), and only 5 percent of on-campus student employees were first-year students.

Because the university was not in a position to simply create new student employee positions, nor was it deemed that such a strategy would really satisfy the need to help first-year students, a more comprehensive program was envisioned—resulting in the creation of the Education and Development Grant for Employability (EDGE) Program.

### **Program Overview**

Students are selected to participate in the EDGE Program subsequent to an official "appeal" of the freshman financial aid award; participation in the program provides students with a \$1,000 grant per quarter toward their tuition for fall, winter and spring for a total of \$3,000.

Through the yearlong program, students are assigned to a departmental EDGE team, which is supervised and mentored by full-time DePaul staff professionals alongside student assistants. In this team setting, EDGE students participate in a variety of workshops designed to develop workplace competencies, financial literacy knowledge and skills, and a connection to the university and its resources. They also complete team-specific activities that contribute to the development of career and job skills. Students participate in no more than 5 to 10 hours a week in program activities.

The offices of Financial Aid and Student Employment within the Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing (EMM) coordinate the program.

***For more information about EDGE, contact: Erik J. Friedman at [efriedm1@depaul.edu](mailto:efriedm1@depaul.edu) or Brenda Williams at [bjames3@depaul.edu](mailto:bjames3@depaul.edu).***