

CollegeHelpers.com offers alternative to traditional - and messy - bulletin board

By Barbara Lehmann/ Townsman Staff
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Working mom seeks college student for afternoon care of 5 year old.

Sounds like an easy job to fill, right? Not if the job is one of hundreds posted in a three-ring binder, or worse, tacked unnoticed on a bulletin board at the college employment office. The working mom may go away empty-handed, her daycare needs unmet.

Enter Fred Grant, director of Campus Life at Babson College. Using his experience as a college administrator and a background in computers, Grant created CollegeHelpers.com, describing it as "a self-serve site for students and employers where employers have the ability to post jobs for part-time college students in one fell swoop,"

At Babson College, Grant saw first-hand the inefficiencies and frustrations of an out-dated manual system used to manage job postings. The process was cumbersome and time-consuming, and it was difficult to keep the job postings organized and up-to-date. In 2000, Grant created CollegeHelpers.com, a user-friendly site that provided timely, organized off-campus part-time job postings for college students. After testing his product at Babson College for a year, he found what didn't work, made adjustments, and introduced the revamped site in 2003 to off-campus employers and Babson students through a link on the Babson College web page.

Non-Babson students also found their way to the site. To accommodate these students and attract new users, Grant expanded his service in 2004 to include other colleges. Since January 2005 more than 1500 college students have used the site, 400 from Boston College alone. The service is free to students and colleges; participating colleges also get 10 percent of the profits for using the free service. Employers are charged a fee for each job posted.

Schools using the service have two options: CollegeHelpers.com will manage the entire job-posting process for the school. "We look for institutions that are in need of a technical solution for how they manage their job postings." Babson College, Boston College, Wellesley College, Wentworth Institute and Pine Manor College use the full service.

CollegeHelpers.com will provide job postings to colleges that have their own system and don't want to change. "Having [this] relationship with the colleges is important, not only because we provide a service, but they become advocates of the web-site." In both cases, the student uses the CollegeHelpers.com link, found on their own college's web site, to respond to job postings.

Only college students may use CollegeHelpers.com. To access the site, the student creates a user account, with a college-based e-mail address required. CollegeHelpers.com sends the student a password only if the student's e-mail ends in 'edu.' "Since it's a secure site, we can guarantee that the only students the employer has access to are college students," said Grant. Once on the site, the student searches for jobs by job type, location, weekly hours, wages, and duration. The student can also create a personal job profile that can be viewed by interested employers. One feature of the service that promotes two-way job searching is E-Notify.

"E-Notify is a great little feature," said Grant, because "it works for students and employers."

For example, if a student has a profile about pet-sitting, he'll get an e-mail when such a job posts. Similarly, the employer will be notified if a student posts a profile with the criteria that they are looking for. Two types of employers use the CollegeHelpers.com website, and are charged accordingly. For-profit employers are charged \$30 a month per posting. Not-for-profit and individual employers are charged \$10 a month per posting. The rates drop if the employer signs up for more than one month at a time. For an additional fee, employers can upgrade their postings to be flagged (listed first), highlighted or in bold print.

"The rates we charge are significantly lower than other [job] sites. Our niche is off-campus, part-time jobs" solely for college students, said Grant. He added, "The other reason we're so much less expensive is that we've kept costs



Fred Grant, owner and creator of CollegeHelpers.com talks about the venture from his Babson College office. (Staff photo by Keith E. Jacobson)

low." Grant designed the web site himself at no cost and all transactions take place on-line. Grant works from home, eliminating office rental costs.

To use the service, the employer creates an account. A password is e-mailed and the job posting process begins. The employer has the option of going first to the Posting Status page to see what other jobs in that category are paying. This ensures that the new job to be posted is competitive with others on the site. Next, the job is posted, including the zip code. The zip code determines the distance from the college to the job site, critical information for the student with transportation limitations. Once the job posting is completed and the employer pays for the service, the posting is active

Most employers post a job for a month at a time and the job is usually filled within the month. However, if the employer is not pleased with the service, Grant explained, "The service is guaranteed; if for any reason, at any time during the process [the employer is dissatisfied], we'll refund 100 percent of their fee."

Dr. Dawn X. Ding, a dermatologist in Natick, has been very satisfied with CollegeHelpers.com, for both personal and professional use. She first used the site a year ago, posting a one-month ad for child care help. In less than a month, she filled the job. "I got a babysitter from Babson College - she was reliable and we really liked her," said Ding. Ding currently has a job posting on the site for a medical receptionist in her dermatology office. She has already had a lot of responses and added that "it's cheaper than the other internet sites for recruiting. For my purpose, looking for part-time [help], it's ideal."

Once a position is filled, the employer deletes the posting. CollegeHelpers.com then sends an evaluation sheet to that employer for feedback. Seventy percent of employers using the service re-post at a later date. Total job postings vary seasonally - there are currently 270 active postings.

CollegeHelpers.com does not pre-screen users of the web site. "We're a job-referral service - we're not screening students or employers. It's up to the employer to do background checks."

For Grant, "The real goal [of CollegeHelpers.com] is to provide an environment for students, employers and colleges to create a network of part-time off-campus jobs that is efficient and a win-win-win situation all the way around."

The competitive world of online job sites

| Company | Rate (per posting) | Duration | Job Types |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| CollegeHelpers.com | \$30/\$10 (for-profit /non-profit) | 1 month | Part-time for college students |
| CareerBuilder.com (also posts on AOL MSN) | \$359 | 30 days | Full time; education level not specified |
| MonsterTRAK.com | \$25 per school 4 weeks | Part-time | full time, internships for students, graduates |
| SnagAJob.com | \$99 | 1 month | Part-time, hourly full time; education level not specified |
| SummerJobs.com | \$42 | 4 weeks | Part-time, full time; education level not specified |