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St. John's University opens 80 new summer jobs for students

*By David Hertz
dhertz@stcloudtimes.com*

COLLEGEVILLE — St. John's University created 80 new full-time summer jobs to help students find employment for the summer and afford tuition.

Jobs were added in response to concern about financial hardships and lack of jobs for students during the economic downturn.

"It was just evident that students were going to have a hard time getting jobs back home," said St. John's Interim President Dan Whalen.

Despite the new positions, demand for jobs still outstripped supply.

"Even the jobs that are thought to be least desirable, the custodial jobs, were snapped up really quick," Whalen said. "I think that's a reflection of the overall job market."

The program increases the number of summer jobs at St. John's from around 200 last year to 280 this year, said Barbara Fahnhorst, director of student employment for St. John's and the College of St. Benedict. Students will work 40 hours a week for 12 weeks, earning a total of \$4,000. Students will work in 31 departments at St. John's, according to Fahnhorst. Tasks range from projects with the St. John's Arboretum to research assistance.

"This initiative has provided at least 80 students the chance to earn money and pay their tuition, so it's a very valuable program," she said.

The new jobs were a relief for students like Leo Flynn. He was seeking summer employment to help pay tuition costs, but didn't receive a single positive response from an employer until he found a position on the brush and burn crew at St. John's. The crew works for the Arboretum clearing wild prairie, among other duties.

"I applied to 10 jobs," Flynn said. "It was pretty frustrating for a while. It was nice when this actually happened, and I got a call back."

Other students, such as Brandon Dale, also on the burn and brush crew, signed up for the experience rather than money.

"We burned 2 acres of wild prairie," Dale said. "That's just not something you do every day."

The students aren't the only ones benefiting from their work.

"The departments were extremely pleased that they'd be able to take on projects they hadn't been able to do before because they didn't have enough student employees," Fahnhorst said.

It isn't clear whether the program will be continued next summer, said Whalen, who will step down from his post next year.

"This is just another part of our program to make sure that everyone who wants to be a (Johnnie) can be a (Johnnie)," Whalen said. "I don't know what will happen next summer. If this works and there's a need, I think we'll find a way (to continue it)."