The University of Rochester in July 2009 strengthened its commitment to City of Rochester youth by formally joining the existing collaboration between the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection (HWSC) and Wegmans Food Markets. The Hillside Work Scholarship Connection addresses the low City of Rochester high school graduation rate by providing coordinated academic, social, and employment training and support. Employment and career mentoring are an essential part of the program.

To apply for employment, HWSC students must meet the Hillside Triple A criteria: positive Attendance, positive Academics, and positive Attitude. Students also participate in the Youth Employment Training Academy, a 30-hour program developed by Wegmans Corporation that teaches customer service, professionalism, and time management skills.

University program staff work to match student applicants with employers based on skill set, job interest, and work hours. Work units interested in employing an HWSC student should ideally have part-time, entry-level positions available with evening and weekend hours. Supervisors and co-workers serve as mentors for the students. The work unit works closely with program staff and their youth advocates who have daily direct contact with employed students. Program staff also ensure that the students are meeting the expectations of the job.

The University of Rochester now employs 31 HWSC students at Rush Rhees Library; Wilson Commons Dining; URMC Imaging Sciences, Anesthesiology, and Perioperative Services Departments; SMH Lobby; the Center for Community Health; the Highlands of Pittsford; and many other work units. Most students are performing clerical and technical duties and are an essential part of the work team.

“We’re looking for employers and mentors throughout the University who are willing to be involved with teens,” says Suzanne Piotrowski Lee, family physician and director of the UR/HWSC Collaboration Program. Suzanne adds, “Mentoring by supervisors, co-workers, undergraduate and graduate students, and other interested employees is essential to the success of teen employees in the University work environment. For students, this opportunity provides career exposure and exploration that they might not otherwise receive.”

Interested departments should contact Suzanne Piotrowski Lee for information about the program at SuzanneP_Lee@urmc.rochester.edu.