Overflow Crowd Packs Staff Collection

by Tony Stumm

Last Friday, beneath murals depicting the hardships of the proletariat in Hicks’ Mural Room, well over a hundred staff and various other members of the Swarthmore community gathered to voice their concerns about staff and administration relations and to hear an administrative response to many of their questions.

This was the second, and originally scheduled to be the last, meeting that would serve as an open forum for staff to express their concerns to the Staffing Long Range Planning Committee (SLRPC). The first meeting, held January 28 in Hicks basement, was standing room only, as over sixty interested staff and faculty attended.

The much larger Mural Room was again filled past capacity last Friday, and Vice President for Finance and Planning Paul Asarian of the SLRPC announced a third meeting, to be held on March 5 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

An informal committee of staff, faculty, and students has recently been petitioning the College for better staff treatment in a variety of areas. A request was made for a number of changes in College policy in a letter recently sent to the members of the SLRPC. The letter included the signatures of 30 staff members and a handful of students and faculty, and set forth many specific and general changes that the staff would like to see made.

“Staffer” is a remarkably broad and encompassing job title at Swarthmore that can describe workers from dining services and the physical plant, administrative assistants, and deans of the College. Staffers, such as the deans, who are paid on a salary basis are called “exempt” staff. All other staff members, who are paid by the hour, are “non-exempt.” As last spring, there were 340 staff members on campus, meaning there are just over four students for every staff member.

The letter, drafted by the ad hoc committee composed mainly of both exempt and non-exempt staff members and dated January 28, took issue with several minor and more significant matters. One of the more serious concerns was the fact that on the SLRPC, only one member was a non-exempt staffer.

“Non-exempt staff don’t have much of a voice,” said Karl Kalwa, an administrative assistant in the Program in Education Department who helped to write the letter.

A few years ago, a group called the Committee on Staff Procedures (COSP) was formed in order to address staff concerns. However, the COSP’s sole function is to advise the President on issues regarding the staff.

In response to the letter, the SLRPC has added four new members, from and appointed by COSP. Of those four new members, two are non-exempt staff. These new members have not yet met with the SLRPC.

Many staffers also have major problems with the communications between staff and administration. For instance, SLRPC has been criticized for its fact-finding methods. “Information gathering (by the SLRPC) was basically talking to the heads of departments to see what they thought,” said Mary Ellen Cichocke ‘67, curator of the Friends Historical Library, member of the ad hoc committee and co-author of the letter.

“A number of COSP members are working to empower COSP to have the ability to deal with issues like this,” said Jeff Lott, Director of Publications and a member of COSP. Pat Trindler, Recruitment Coordinator of the Career Planning & Placement Office and a member of COSP, newly appointed to the SLRPC, added, “We are in the process of looking at COSP’s function. This ad hoc committee has brought a lot of stuff out in the open.”

At this time, neither the faculty nor any portion of the staff is unionized. There has been some talk of unionization among staff, although unions could actually cause problems among the different factions of the staff because the jobs that staff members have are so diverse.

“So many of our concerns are exactly the same,” said Kalwa. “I think we are all concerned about how hard everybody works on committees, but the suggestions of the committees are not always followed.”

At press time, senior members of the SLRPC could not be reached for comment.

Swarthmore is in the midst of... see Staff, page 4
Staffers Unite for Better Treatment from Coll

from page 1

ge planning, with several College Committee subgroups attempting to define the future of Swarthmore areas, including staffing.

staff members have taken this opportunity to push for more voice in the com-
more well-defined systems for air-

ances, and better general commu-

between the administration and the

long term planning was a great pos-

address all those conditions,” said

Professor of Russian Thompson Bradley, another member of the ad hoc committee.

“Our ideals in terms of the long-range planning process is that it be open and the COSP be able to relate for themselves,” said Chijioke.

Another change pushed for in the letter is a published salary schedule, the absence of which exemplifies the lack of communication between the staff and the administration.

“Unless you have a published salary schedule there is no way of knowing how you could move up on the scale,” said Kalwaic. The College has recently made some movement towards publishing pay schedules. Aslanian noted at the meeting Friday that just last year Swarthmore started publishing the minimum wages for all job opportunities.

There are also questions about staff levels and grades. “The present system for grading staff positions is outdated and unevenly applied,” states the letter. “We consider it essential for staff at all levels and in all areas of College activity to participate actively in the development of a new system.”

Also brought up are the base wage, “the widening differential between faculty and staff compensation,” and “perpetuation of the hierarchical culture of the College.” The letter complains that there is serious stratification at Swarthmore, with the staff positioned well below students in social positioning.

Also coming under scrutiny was the grievance process. It is not extremely well-defined for staff members, and many are thus fearful of bringing up problems with their supervisors, especially if the problem is with the supervisor.

“The [grievance] process is extremely well developed for faculty, why shouldn’t they staff?” asked Bradley.

The letter also presses for minimum wage within the College. Kalwaic did not know how this might affect.

The staffing issue can be continued to unfold next Thursday open meeting with the place. A location for the meeting is not yet known.