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Staff: salaries below market averages

From STAFF, pg. 1

nance Paul Aslanian noted that of the 1999 budgeted Funds to Support New Programs, two-thirds has been allotted for staff wages.

According to Kalwaic, however, a large number of staff remain below FMV. Upon hiring, staff are told that, with satisfactory performance, they can expect to make FMV after three to five years. The College now meets 100 percent of FMV for non-faculty employees, but this is an average that includes upper- as well as lower-tier staff.

"Generally speaking, people within five years should reach the Full Market Value of their job," Aslanian said. "We can't be mechanical in saying that everybody in five years will be making Full Market Value," but he said that cases of long-term employees remaining below their FMV, if they exist, are rare.

Despite efforts to pay FMV, the College continues to have problems recruiting qualified and talented staff. The 1999 Accreditation Self-Study prepared by the College for the Middle States team pointed out that "even with a philosophy of paying '100 percent of the market average,' the College is paying only at the 50th percentile in the market for all but the higher/highest level jobs... Swarthmore's current staff compensation strategy appears insufficient to attract the quality of workforce it may need to sustain excellence."

In competitive trades, the College has felt the push to offer market-level wages to new employees, but long-term employees in these jobs complain that the newcomers make more than they do. One employee, who asked to remain anonymous, said that staff see longevity negatively. "Because new employees must be hired at competitive salaries, there is a general sense that the longer you stay, the worse off you are," the employee said. "As you might expect, this is highly demoralizing to a staff which considers a long-term commitment to be valuable to the College."

Aslanian said that sometimes wages of new employees are adjusted to account for experience. "We could hire a systems programmer who has six years' ex-

perience outside of Swarthmore and pay them more than a programmer who has two years experience at Swarthmore," he explained. But it doesn't happen, he said, that the wages of newcomers exceed those of more experienced employees.

The situation is complicated by the fact that many staff remain confused about the College's labor policy. Under pressure from Kalwaic and others, the College now publishes a table of the FMV for the different pay levels on the Internet, but many employees do not fully understand the wage structure. One administrative assistant who was interviewed knew that FMV had a bearing on her wages, but she did not know how it was determined or where she could find information about it.

Since March, the College has had no director of Human Resources to address staff confusion. Aslanian said that the situation has "been a real problem, but we've had almost heroic responses from the people in Human Resources." He said the College has hired an outside search team to find a new director, and six candidates are currently under consideration for the job.

According to the Accreditation Self-Study, the lack of a Human Resources director is part of an ongoing problem. The report stated that "the College has had, as a part of its culture, a default position that dollars not spent directly on student and/or faculty, are dollars not well spent. Human Resources is a good example of this 'neglect.'"

Employees echo this concern. Kathleen Kerns, administrative assistant for the political science department, said, "I think one of the big problems is that we feel our concerns aren't taken very seriously, while the concerns of faculty and students are taken very seriously. We're more or less replaceable."

Aslanian disagreed. "Faculty and students are the core center of our institution," he said, "but the staff are crucial to the overall success of our mission."

Kalwaic would like to agree with Aslanian, but, for now, she feels that the importance of non-faculty staff is not fully recognized. "They take the humanitarian approach," she said of the College administration. "We're always told what great workers we are, but then they don't act on it."

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Staff claims that wages are subpar

By Mara Hvistendahl
Phoenix Staff

Kae Kalwaic is still unsatisfied. A few years ago, Kalwaic, an administrative assistant for the education department, was concerned about her own wages, which were below the national average for her profession. Then, in her sixth year of employment, she finally began making the wages she had been told that she could expect after three to five years. Now, a year later, she advocates for increased wages for others and for more openness about the College's payment system. "To me," she said, "this is an issue of inequality."

Labor conditions for non-faculty staff at Swarthmore have been a source of contention for at least a decade. In 1989, a report published by the Middle States Accreditation evaluation team brought attention to wages that stagnated below the Fair Market Value (FMV), or the average wage that a worker performing up to standards gets in the marketplace. The report described workers who felt "underpaid [and] undervalued."

Since then, the College has taken steps toward fixing this problem. In an effort

The giving tree



Trees such as this one can be seen all over campus. Students, faculty and staff have pledged to buy the gifts specified on the cards that hang from the tree.

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