

who are we and why are we here?

Q: What is the living wage campaign?

A: The Living Wage Campaign is a coalition of Swarthmore staff, faculty and students working to improve staff wages, transparency of staff-related decisions, and staff inclusion at the College. It is currently comprised of concerned students, staff and faculty. We are continually attempting to increase our representation from all sectors of the college community.

Q: What's the democracy part of the living wage and democracy campaign?

A: It's the committee structure, stupid. (Just kidding.) A major part of our proposal is to address the lack of transparency and the concentrated decision-making power at Swarthmore. We believe that not only should a Swarthmore wage be a living wage, but also that all members of the community should have a real voice in the process that decides their wages and other important decisions.

Q: Are staff a part of this campaign?

A: Staff have been a part of this campaign from the start. However, there is a continued effort to garner more support and individual involvement from all members of the college community, especially those directly affected by the Campaign.

Q: Has the campaign made efforts to work with the administration?

A: From numerous meetings with Human Resources to talks with the senior administrators, the LW & DC has sought to engage the administration in both informal conversations and formal meetings. This campaign is not about alienating staff from the

Administration; it's about opening up lines of communication and dialogue within the community.

Q: Are there other living wage campaigns?

A: Numerous cities and counties have passed ordinances to secure a living wage for their workers, and campaigns are currently running everywhere from Birmingham to Salt Lake City. In addition to Swarthmore, campus campaigns are taking place throughout the nation, including significant victories at Haverford and Stanford.

Q: Why does Swarthmore have a living wage campaign?

A: As a school that has prided itself upon and publicized its commitment to social justice, Swarthmore College has a moral imperative to pay a self-sufficiency wage to its staff and to make the decision-making processes involving staff more transparent and democratic. To do otherwise would be contrary to the Quaker foundations upon which the College rests. Paying staff a living wage and including staff in decisions relating to them is simply a matter of respect, appreciation, and commitment. The Living Wage campaign is aware that few businesses and organizations have implemented a living wage. This, however, is not an argument against Swarthmore implementing a living wage. What's popular isn't always right.

what about wages?

Q: Does the work that staff members perform deserve a living wage?

A: We believe that staff members who take care of our needs everyday—who make our food and clean our bathrooms, for instance—definitely deserve a wage that will allow them to support themselves and their families.

Q: What wage are you recommending?

A: The Living Wage campaign is not currently endorsing a specific wage; the main goal right now is to secure a commitment to developing a living wage at Swarthmore. As a base, however, we are working with self-sufficiency numbers, such as the ones provided by Women's Association for Women's Alternatives (WAWA), that are tailored to estimate the cost of living in Delaware County, as opposed to numbers based on what other colleges pay their workers.

as a school that has prided itself upon and publicized its commitment to social justice, swarthmore college has a moral imperative to pay a self-sufficiency wage to its staff and to make the decision-making processes involving staff more transparent and democratic.

Q: Is the living wage campaign advocating wages based on family size?

A: Wait, isn't that Communism? Seriously, paying wages based on family size is illegal. We are asking that the Swarthmore minimum wage be a wage that will allow most staff to provide for their basic needs without working second or third jobs.

Q: Don't staff here get good benefits? Shouldn't this be taken into account in your campaign for a living wage?

A: Many staff report that the benefits offered by Swarthmore are far better than average, relative to other employers in the area. However, benefits

don't put you above the poverty line. Benefits don't buy groceries, pay rent, or provide childcare options. We applaud Swarthmore's commitment to offering relatively good benefits, but insist that staff still require a living wage to meet their needs.

Q: Would a living wage policy mean that some staff would lose their jobs?
A: A living wage plan that includes current staff losing their jobs is contrary to the goals of this campaign. We believe that Swarthmore has the resources to raise wages without resorting to downsizing. It is a matter of our priorities.

Q: If the college commits to pay its permanent staff better wages, don't you worry that it would subcontract at lower wages?
A: Our proposal asks Swarthmore to commit not only to a living wage for permanent staff, but not to subcontract with any company that pays its workers less than the Swarthmore wage for comparable work. The intent of this policy is to eliminate the incentive to subcontract.

We're asking the school to radically reevaluate the way they treat and compensate staff. When the administration decides something is important they find the money to make it happen.

how do we propose...?

Q: Where would the money for staff salary increases come from?
A: Probably the biggest opposition to the campaign comes from people who fear that their interests (be it faculty salaries, student financial aid, athletics or salary pool. There's a general assumption that the money for staff salaries will have to be wrestled out of an already-tight budget.

Here's the bottom line: what we're asking the school to do is radically reevaluate the way they treat and compensate staff. This would mean deciding that staff wages are a high enough priority that they have to come up with the money. Historically, when the administration decides something is important-be it large-scale events, specific financial aid packages or a new building-they **find** the money to make it happen. And they find it outside of the school's general operating budget.

Q: Has the campaign offered any specific suggestions?
A: While we have not submitted a detailed proposal about where the money is to come from to finance staff raises, the whole language of the campaign and the unofficial suggestions we've made ask that the college look outside the current budget for staff salary money. What we are proposing is not that the current budget pie be divided into even smaller pieces, but that the size of the pie increase.

visit

www.swatlivingwage.org

for more info.

what's

popular

isn't always

right.

frequently asked question
about

swarthmore's

living wage &

democracy campaign