



October 15, 1996

Gilbert Rose, President
American Association of University Professors
Swarthmore College

Dear Gil,

Over the years the role of the Administrative Assistant at Swarthmore College has changed, as managing the complexities of a modern college office has placed increasing demands on this position. Administrative Assistants furnish the initiative and the sense of responsibility in offices where technology and Chairs continue to change. Administrative Assistants are self-reliant, setting goals and solving problems. We submit these proposals as a continuation of the uniquely American style of participative initiative.

At the same time we recognize that the effective running of departments is dependent upon the collegial relationship of the Administrative Assistants, the Chairs and the Faculty, and we believe that this should be the starting point for any changes. In this spirit of collegiality we welcome the support of the AAUP in our endeavor to understand the workings of this institution with regard to issues including but not limited to salary, grievance, and dismissal decisions and the rationale behind such decisions. We believe that Administrative Assistants' participation in such a collective will provide a sense of dignity and fulfillment resulting in improved morale; the potential benefits for Swarthmore College are compelling.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of Thompson Bradley and the students with whom he worked, who have documented the concerns of the staff at Swarthmore College. We thank the Executive Committee of the AAUP for taking the time to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Eleonore Baginski, Administrative Coordinator, Modern Languages
Kae Kalwaic, Administrative Assistant, Education
Judy Lord, Administrative Assistant, Music
Kay McGinty, Administrative Assistant, Chemistry
Sarah Seastone, Administrative Assistant, Classics

cc: Thompson Bradley, Professor
Lynne Molter, Chair, Equal Opportunity Committee
Eva Travers, Co-chair, Women's Concerns Committee
Julia Welbon, Co-chair, Women's Concerns Committee

CONCERNS AND PROPOSALS
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CONCERN 1

That, because of their timing, Faculty/departmental requests for increases in salaries for Administrative Assistants are currently difficult or impossible to implement.

PROPOSAL 1

That discussions of Administrative Assistants' salaries be included in Chairs' annual meetings with the Provost to discuss faculty salaries, making the matter collegial--that is, recognizing in spirit and concretely the close and interdependent relationship that exists between the Administrative Assistants and the Faculty members in each department.

CONCERN 2

That there exists no published salary schedule to which Administrative Assistants, Chairs and the Administration can refer in order to determine whether or how salaries reflect such factors as work experience, acquired skills, and education.

PROPOSAL 2

A) That actual salary range figures be made known and available to Administrative Assistants, Chairs and the Administration in the form of a salary schedule.

B) That the previous work experience and newly acquired skills of each Administrative Assistant be clearly and fully recorded, together with the complete educational background and carry real weight in consideration of salary, salary increases, and promotion.

CONCERN 3

That evaluations of work performance do not currently translate into salary increases clearly enough for Administrative Assistants, Chairs and the Administration to understand the criteria used to determine the salary increases awarded.

The awarding or lack of awarding of what is in reality a very small merit increase based on evaluation has a negative effect on morale since it functions as a reward for one and punishment for another. Department Heads often express dissatisfaction with this system of evaluation.

[The actual amount of a "merit" increase is always small. For example, if an employee working full-time (35 hours a week, 52 weeks a year) at \$12/hour or \$21,840 a year receives a standard 2.5% increase so that his/her evaluation deals only with whether to award 1.5% more, this 1.5% represents only \$327.60 or \$6.30 per week.]

PROPOSAL 3

That considerations of salary be unlinked from formal written evaluations.

CONCERN 4

That grievances of Administrative Assistants may not be dealt with as seriously or carefully and fairly as are those of the Faculty. The procedures stated in the current Standards of Conduct are not always applied or are carried out only in part; the system strongly favors the institution and the burden all too often falls on the lone grievant.

PROPOSAL 4

A) That there be initiated strong, clear and effective grievance procedures in support of individual Administrative Assistants.

B) That, in recognition of the collegial relationship between the Administrative Assistants and the Faculty and our mutual responsibility for one another, the College include a group or collective role for Faculty members, other Administrative Assistants, and most particularly an ombudsman to witness and act in concert with any grievant.