

College raises wages for hourly staff

By Mara Hvistendahl
Phoenix Staff

Finally acknowledging that many hourly staff are paid at below the market value, the college allocated \$50,000 toward bringing those staff up to the wages they are told they can expect upon hiring.

The \$50,000 was approved by the Board of Managers as part of the 2000-2001 budget, which also includes funding for an across-the-board 4 percent staff salary increase. While a yearly raise is routine to account for inflation, this is the first time in recent years that additional funding of this kind and amount has been allotted for hourly staff.

"We have to just be more competitive," Vice President of Finance Paul Aslanian commented. "With hourly employees we were under the market when we did our homework." He added that it is difficult for the college to keep up with the booming economy, which means that the Fair Market Value (FMV), or the average market wage, is continually rising.

Aslanian said in the December 10, 1999 issue of the Phoenix that to his knowledge all staff performing at a satisfactory level reach Fair Market Value (FMV), or the average market wage, af-

ter three to five years of employment.

The reaction among staff is mixed: while some are hailing the funding as a capstone to a successful year in relations between the administration and staff, others view the changes with seasoned skepticism.

Michelle Hartel, a cashier at Kohlberg Coffee Bar and a member of the Staff Advisory Council (SAC), said that she suspects most of the staff she represents in Dining Services are uninformed about the raise and the new allocated funding.

And if they were to learn about it, she said, they would temper their excitement with experience. "They've always been fighting for more money...Let's wait to see it. I know that's what they'd say."

Yet some staff members see the funding as part of a new administrative effort toward addressing staff concerns. SAC ostensibly exists to give staff a chance to have a say in the formation of policies that concern them.

"We really had a lot of input from a lot of staff feeding into the process," Aslanian said. "It wasn't a matter of the President's staff sitting in a room with the windows closed and just dreaming up what would be the best

[wage increase policy]. It was a matter of having some ideas and recommendations and having them float through the committee structure."

SAC member Judy Lord, coordinator to the Department of Music and Dance, said that while "we didn't have anything to do with [funding allocations],...Paul [Aslanian] was good about coming to us to let us know what the plans were. This was presented to us before it went out there."

Lord and Pat Coyne, SAC member and administrative coordinator to the dean of the college, agreed that the new funding represents a recent administrative receptivity to staff concerns. In the past year, the administration has allocated funds to reimbursing tuition for staff, hired full-time Equal Opportunity and human resources coordinators, and moved toward addressing concerns about child care.

"More and more, the administration is listening to us. I think it's been a great year," Coyne said.

For Hartel, reaching FMV is appreciated, but it is just the beginning. "The people on the hill in the reception area of the library, they start out at more money than a checker who's been here for years," she said.