



May 15, 1997

Dear President Bloom, Barbara Carroll and Members of COSP,

In our roles as members of the Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee this year, we have become increasingly aware of the problems created by the inequality of voice in the decision-making processes at Swarthmore College. For example, this spring the Equal Opportunity Committee forwarded for consideration for the Swarthmore community a proposal about consensual relations that was envisioned to become part of the handbooks that govern the activities of the three groups of affected people: faculty, staff and student. As this proposal moved from the Committee to the community, we again were reminded of the various methods of review and adoption that each of these three segments has at its disposal. The procedure for staff consideration was clearly not as inclusive and thorough in its review as for the two other groups. In general, the staff members of this community have less voice in the policies that govern their work lives.

While our Committee is a model for inclusion--faculty, staff and students are fairly equally represented, this Committee appears to be about the only chance most staff, especially non-exempt staff, have to reviewing this proposals. To give more equal control to the staff members another larger audience should have formal ways to review and speak about the implications of this and other policies.

We urge that Swarthmore College and especially those members most able to affect the course of community governance for staff (the President, director of Human Resources and COSP) review the way staff discusses and votes on issues that affect them. Issues of communication of the policies, chances to express views about them, and the way in which they are to be accepted and implemented all need to be addressed. Special attention also needs to be paid to the ability of non-exempt staff to enter the process. This group is the least reached by institutional communications and generally doesn't have the time or vehicle to respond to these policies. Most staff have less voice on the modifications and acceptance of policies than do the other two segments of this community--faculty and students.

We recommend that COSP, in concert with the administration, undertake a review of governance for staff and create new structures for larger staff input. This issue could also be discussed as part of the long range planning for staff that is already underway. Our proposal is that these groups look at the way the staff has of venting their issues of governance over and above participating in individual committees. Your leadership and support would ensure greater equality of voice for all members of the Swarthmore Community. We offer our help in communicating this goal and look forward to receiving your thoughts and suggestions on this matter.

Sincerely,

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