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Employ-
"Handbook"
The Women's Center

HANDBOOK FOR UNIVERSITY OFFICE WORKERS -

Organizing for Change

9 to 5, Organization for Women Office Workers
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INTRODUCTION

Boston is the home of nearly 100 colleges and universities, many of them highly renowned. Yet university and college office workers are among the lowest paid clericals in a city notorious for its low wages* and high cost of living. Understandably, the turnover rate is high.

At the same time, university office workers have been the most active among office workers in seeking change in these conditions. In the past three or four years, organizing efforts have sprung up on every major campus, as well as many smaller ones.

The 9 to 5 Universities Committee has been an important meeting ground for women working in many area schools. We have taken the opportunity to share our experiences, and in doing so have discovered a movement larger than our own individual efforts. We have also gained concrete information on legal rights, affirmative action, and unions, and have learned skills to make us more effective in organizing for change at work.

*According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston office workers rank third lowest in pay among the 15 largest cities in the U.S. Only Memphis and Birmingham pay their office workers less.

This handbook is designed to help answer some of the common questions we face. It begins with our view of some of the myths clouding the cold facts of working for a university (page 3). The tables on pages 6 through 8 contain information on wages and benefits for seven of the major area universities, and for typical companies in other industries. The second section of the handbook provides information which can help us act to change some of the conditions outlined in the first section.

Our thanks go to Betty Gittes of City Women for Action, Leslie Sullivan of District 65, and the 9 to 5 staff in preparing this handbook. For more information or advice, call 9 to 5.

MYTHS AND FACTS OF WORKING FOR A UNIVERSITY

1. The Myth of Prestige: It's better to work at a university than at other businesses; get prestige from name of university; surrounded by elite intellectuals.

Fact: The prestige of the university does not rub off on the employee. Other people may be doing exciting work, but office work remains the same as in any other business. Elite intellectuals often tend to feel a greater gap between "them" and "us" than in other office situations.

2. The Myth of the Stimulating Environment: University department is an exciting place with a vibrant atmosphere.

Fact: The atmosphere may be stimulating for the faculty, but not for the office worker. The excitement of intellectual wonder in a university goes on around the office worker, who is not encouraged to explore the intellectual side of the department.

3. The Myth of the Relaxed Atmosphere: The university department is not an uptight place; punctuality less strictly enforced; can wear what you want.

Fact: If the office worker takes advantage of these liberalities, she may find them used against her when reviewed for salary and merit raises.

4. The Myth of the Spirit of Community: Emphasis on teamwork and the idea that "we are all working together".

Fact: Department policy often excludes staff from considerations. Department chairmen often assert that nothing can be done about staff working conditions because of problems with the higher bureaucracy. Office workers are part of the "happy team" but that team is working for someone else who controls the destiny of the office worker.

5. The Myth of the Fixed Budget: This is the old stand-by reply to requests for salary increases or attempts to hire more staff.

Fact: No budget is so fixed that money can't be transferred from another account to finance staff needs. The truth is staff are never regarded as a priority item in the scheme of a department. In many places the university office worker receives low pay, no merit increases, and randomly enforced cost-of-living increases when they exist at all. At some universities jobs are available but remain unfilled every year. Where does the money budgeted for these staff positions go to?

6. The Myth of Promotion/Mobility: Universities often stress that promotion from within is encouraged.

Fact: In fact, very few office workers are promoted, at least not to different kinds of jobs, and only with

difficulty to higher-graded secretarial positions. On-the-job training for better positions is almost non-existent.

7. The Myth of Tuition Remission: The office worker is provided the chance to do course work at reduced tuition.

Fact: The university often stipulates that course work must be job-related and pursued either in the evenings or on week-ends, limiting the office worker in her educational pursuits.

UNIVERSITY	SALARY PLAN	FRINGE BENEFITS	TUITION POLICY
BOSTON COLLEGE	?	Medical: university contributes 50% Pension: " " 6% Vacation: 2 wks after 1 yr; 3 wks after 6 yrs; 4 wks after 15 yrs	100% --undergrad. Boston College courses only
BOSTON UNIVERSITY	"Merit" Review time specified by sprvr Range: \$82/wk to \$229/wk (35 hrs)	Medical: Harvard Community Health; Blue Cross/Blue Shield, major med. Pension: required after 2 yrs. continuous service btw. age 30 - 55. Vacation: 2 wks after 1 yr; 3 wks after 2 yrs.	50% evening and Saturday. Remission policy for next of kin.
HARVARD	"Merit" Range: \$100/wk to \$243/wk (35 hrs) Ave. 6-7% increase.	Medical: university pays 50% Pension: non-contributory--must work for 10 yrs Vacation: 3 wks after 1 year + 3 floating days	50% anywhere, but must be job related--determined by Dean of department
MIT	"Merit" Range: \$80/wk to \$222/wk (35 hrs)	Medical: Blue Cross-Blue Shield University pays a little over 80%. Pension: non-contributory (fund self-supporting now) Vacation: 1-11 months=5/6 day/mth; 1-5 yrs=10 days; 5-15 yrs=15 days; 15 yrs on = 20 days	100% for outside MIT courses. 75% for MIT courses--1 per semester
TUFTS	"Merit" Annual review. Ave. 6-7% increase	Medical: Univ. Health Services; Harvard Community Health; Blue Cross-Blue Shield; major medical. Pension: required if employee is 30-60 yrs old or under 30 and at university 5 yrs	100% Tufts only. "Feasible" number of courses. Remission policy for next of kin.
UMASS/BOSTON	Step increases for 7 yrs. Cost of living as prov. by state Range: \$107.15/wk to \$281.90/wk	Medical: Harvard Comm. Health; Aetna and major medical. Vacation: 2 wks after 1 yr; 3 wks after 5 yrs; 4 wks after 10 yrs.	1 free course/sem.

HOW COMPANIES RATE ON BENEFITS - FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

(Holidays & Sick Leave, being fairly standard, were not included)

BENEFITS	MANUFACTURING CO. UNIONIZED	MANUFACTURING CO. NON-UNIONIZED	HOSPITAL	FOOD DISTRIBUTION CO.
Health Insurance	Co. pays BC-BS premium (comprehensive plan) + added surgical & major medical + dependents	Company pays 2/3	Co. pays 50%	Company pays 100%
Life Insurance including Supplement Life Insurance	Co. pays \$6,000	Paid by employee	Company pays amount = to yearly salary, rounded up to next 500.	1,000 plan paid by Co; 3 plans available
Long-term Disability	Co. pays \$55/wk. Co. pays 100%	Co. pays 50%	Company pays	Company pays
Travel-Accident Insurance	Co. pays 100%	Co. pays 100%	Company pays 100%	Individual pays low rate; balance paid by Company
Pension Plan	Co. pays 100%	100% w/optional employee contributions	Company pays all; 2 yrs.	2-10% paid by individual; 2 yrs.
Vacations	6-12 mo. - 1 wk. 1-10yrs. - 2 wks. 10-20 yrs. - 3 wks. 20- yrs. - 4 wks.	1 yr. - 10 days; 1 day for every yr. thereafter	less than a yr. to one week 1 yr.-2 wks. 5 yrs.-3 wks. 10 yrs.-4 wks.	6-11 mos. - 1 wk. 1 yr. - 2 wks. 5 yrs. - 3 wks. 20 yrs. - 4 wks.
Education	Co. pays tuition up to 9 credits/semester; Time off up to 5 hrs./wk. 2 hrs. with pay	Co. pays 80%	3 mo. employment required; 100% (to maximum of \$200/semester)	100% tuition remission

INFLATION

According to the Department of Labor Statistics, the cost of living in Boston rose 11.8% from July 1973 to July 1974. The cost of living nationwide rose 11.2% from Aug. 1973 to Aug. 1974.



With inflation at 12% a year, each month a dollar is worth 1¢ less. If your salary is stated as \$8004 a year, here is what you will actually receive by next June:

	<u>GROSS PAY</u>		<u>\$1.00 IS WORTH</u>		<u>PAY AFTER INFLATION</u>
July	\$667	x	\$.99	=	\$660.33
Aug.	667	x	.98	=	653.66
Sept.	667	x	.97	=	646.99
Oct.	667	x	.96	=	640.32
Nov.	667	x	.95	=	633.65
Dec.	667	x	.94	=	626.98
Jan. '	667	x	.93	=	620.31
Feb.	667	x	.92	=	613.64
March	667	x	.91	=	606.97
April	667	x	.90	=	600.30
May	667	x	.89	=	593.63
June	667	x	.88	=	586.96
TOTAL	\$8004				\$7483.74

(Source: "Medical Area District 65 at Harvard" vol. 1, no. 1, 7/23/74)

LEGAL RIGHTS ON THE JOB

Employees are often afraid to take action to demand their rights and improve their position for fear of employer reprisal. While this fear is not totally unjustified, there are laws which protect employees who are trying to organize or to assert their civil rights. Listed below are some of those laws, the agencies which administer them, and a brief description of the scope of each.

1. National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act)

National Labor Relations Board
15 New Chardon St.
Boston
223-3300

This law guarantees to employees the right to self-organize to form or join unions, or to engage in other concerted (group) activity for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. Under the NLRA it is an unfair labor practice for an employer to intimidate, coerce, or harass an employee because of her union or other concerted activities.

Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission
100 Cambridge St.
Boston
727-3505

This state agency provides the same protection as the NLRB for employees whose employers do not come under the jurisdiction of the NLRB. If you have a labor relations

complaint start at the NLRB. If they do not have jurisdiction file with the State Commission.

2. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
150 Causeway St.
Boston
223-4535

This law prohibits discrimination on account of race, creed, color, religion, sex, or national origin by an employer of fifteen or more persons. Discrimination is prohibited in all the terms and conditions of employment including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, promotion, assignment, and termination. In addition the law prohibits harassment of any employee for filing a complaint under this act or for attempting to assert her civil rights.

3. Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Act

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
120 Tremont St.
Boston
727-3990

This law is similar to Title VII except that it includes employees who work for employers of six or more people. Harassment charges may be limited to harassment of those who file the charges or those who aid someone filing charges under the Act. (This Act has more limited application than Title VII.)

4. Equal Pay Act

Wage and Hour Division
US Department of Labor
38 Chauncy St.
Boston
223-6751

The Equal Pay Act makes it illegal for an employer to pay employees who do substantially similar work different amounts on the basis of sex. Harassment of employees who file complaints is also made illegal.

5. Executive Order 11246

Office of Federal Contract Compliance
125 Lincoln
Boston
223-5565

Health, Education, and Welfare
Office for Civil Rights
RKO General Building
Boston
223-6397

Executive Order 11246 prohibits federal contractors from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age or sex. Under the Executive Order employers of over 50 people who have \$50,000 in federal contracts are required to file Affirmative Action Plans. Employers are subject to compliance reviews. Complaints may be filed with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance or with the federal monitoring agency for the particular industry. All colleges and universities are monitored by the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Many colleges and universities are required to have affirmative action plans either as federal contractors under Executive Order 11246 or because they have been found to have discriminated in the past. For office workers within these institutions it is important to know not only what a plan is and who must have them but more particularly whether they can be of use in improving the conditions of office work.

What is affirmative action? It is the attempt by an employer to correct practices. It is more than a statement that the employer will not discriminate. In fact, it requires not only that the employer stop discriminating but also that it take additional action to correct the effects of past discrimination.

What actions are required? In general, affirmative action plans require that the personnel selection process be open-- that is, that jobs be posted and that recruitment take place, that objective criteria for candidate selection be used, and that the employer promise to meet specific goals and timetables for ending discrimination.

Who is required to have a plan? Employers who have 50

or more employees and have \$50,000 or more in federal contracts.

How can office workers see their employer's plan? Ask the personnel officer or supervisor, or ask the federal monitoring agency. Affirmative action plans for colleges and universities are monitored by the Office of Contract Compliance and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Can office workers benefit from affirmative action within their institutions? Yes. Some people only think of affirmative action as a means for helping to improve the status of professionals, and some institutions write their plans that way. If your institution's plan has not addressed the problems of office workers, complain to the federal monitoring agencies.

An affirmative action plan which deals with the problems of office workers should provide mechanisms for getting office workers out of dead end jobs. Promotional routes from clerical to administrative and other jobs should be developed. Openings should be posted. The entry level qualifications which tend to eliminate women and are not business necessities should be eliminated. Training should be provided to women to help them meet minimum job qualifications. Institutions should undertake a survey of women

employees to find those who are overqualified and whose skills could be used in higher level jobs. Another area, often overlooked, is the responsibility of institutions to integrate all areas of work racially and sexually--including office work. This would mean the recruitment of men into the area (perhaps, as so often happens, raising the salary levels):

UNIONS

A union is a legally recognized group of employees who negotiate their terms of employment with their employer through collective bargaining. In this way, employees are able to deal with their employer from a position of mutual strength and respect, and participate in the decision-making process. In universities, as in other businesses, employees are subject to a whole range of rules and regulations which have been determined solely by the university and applied to individual employees with varying consistency. Thus, the interests of employees are dependent upon the good will of the institution and the benevolence of individual supervisors. Employees form unions, then, to promote their interests, protect individual employees from arbitrary and unfair treatment, and ensure employee participation in decisions which so vitally affect their lives.

Some aspects of the work situation which employees can negotiate are salary ranges, raises, promotion procedure and job classification, daycare, safety, health benefits, pensions, grievance procedure, job security, and education benefits. Since all aspects of our work situation are negotiable, this is necessarily only a partial list, and it is up to each group of employees to determine what benefits they need.

One area of collective bargaining interest which has become increasingly important with the growth of the women's

movement is that of your relationship to your work. Secretaries and technicians can now see that their role in the university is a vital and valuable one and expect it to be recognized as such. Union contracts are now being negotiated which do not permit supervisors to require employees to do personal work (such as getting coffee or running personal errands), but do allow employees some choice in the kind of work they perform.

Derek Bok, president of Harvard University, states that today "the growth points of collective bargaining are more likely to lie in enlarging the employee's freedom and interest in his (sic) work...and it is in these endeavors that some of the most interesting and important frontiers of bargaining can be found."

We agree. Clerical and technical workers--85% of whom are women--who are now beginning to organize into unions have a unique opportunity to expand collective bargaining to benefit all employees while transforming the role of women in the labor force.

ORGANIZING TIPS

In organizing to change our working conditions, we often come up against the same problems and questions. Following are suggestions for ways to handle some common problems.

What can I do? I'm all alone.

You aren't the only one who feels the way you do.

Do you think your office is too small? Are you annoyed that you are expected to work overtime at a moment's notice? Does it bother you that you don't know what they say in your salary review? Did your last cost of living increase only come to one-half of this year's rise in the cost of living? Do you wish you had more say in the way things are run? No matter what the problem, chances are that you are not the only one who has it.

If you're unhappy at work: 1) make a list of all the things that are bothering you, from the arrangement of the desks to the pay; 2) make a list of all the things you do at work -- remember, your work is important and you do a lot of it; and then 3) make a list of all the people in the office, the department, or the school and think about how they probably feel about some of these things. Talk to them.

Now you've got a group.

We're a group -- Now what do we do?

A group is stronger than an individual, but it has to do

more than just talk about problems. Take a good look at your group--

1) Is it small or large? How does it compare with the size of the staff of your department? the whole university?

2) Are you all from one or two departments or are you scattered throughout the school?

3) Are you all around the same age? the same race? the same sex? How does this compare with the staff in general?

4) What are most of the people in the group concerned about? Does this concern other employees as well?

The answers to some of these questions should help you decide what issues to take up. If you're all from the same department, work on an issue that concerns the department to start off with. A victory in one department will be more effective in getting others to be active than lots of university-wide meetings. If your group is made up of people from similar backgrounds and age, make sure that the tone of your group does not exclude others. Your aim is to include as many people as possible eventually.

Different issues appeal to different people. One group found that their successful fight for maternity benefits left some of the older women in the office cold. They've decided to fight for time off for "personal days" next because of its

broader appeal.

As for size, it only takes one to start a group, so don't be discouraged if you start out small. A small group can do a lot to shake up the administration and raise issues that concern everyone. But if you're not growing, try to think of why, and try something new to correct it.

But whatever you do, do something.

Our meetings are boring.

Meetings should not just happen. They should be planned for. If your meetings don't get anything done and are boring, people won't want to come back. Here are some hints to help you have good meetings:

- 1) Know what you're meeting for.
- 2) Start on time.
- 3) Someone should chair the meeting: think about it in advance; prepare an agenda; keep the conversation on the track.
- 4) Have an agenda and stick to it. You don't have time to talk about everything, so limit the number of items.
- 5) Welcome new members. Summarize the work of your group for them briefly, and then go on to your business.
- 6) Make sure that members report on their assignments from last week, and that everyone leaves with a new assignment, however small (making a phone call, post-

ing a flyer). This will reinforce everyone's commitment and make them participants instead of observers.

7) Summarize the meeting at the end, so you all know what you've done, and what you've got left to do.

8) Show your spirit.

Everybody seems so apathetic--how can we persuade them to be active?

The first thing to remember is that the burden of proof is on you. You are the one who wants to convince them of something. They didn't ask you to come yak their ear off. So extend yourself, don't get huffy, don't be condescending, be patient, be good-humored and motivated.

Secondly, others will become interested and active at different times, depending on their jobs, other commitments, or what they think of your group at the moment. So don't butt your head against a stone wall. If you know of people who are sympathetic but just won't become active, keep them informed but don't expect much from them for the time being. By keeping them informed, however, you make it easier for them to join when they are ready to. It's better to work with a small spirited group than a large group of doubters.

Some people may be afraid to join your group. Their fear is legitimate, so don't brush it off. It's as if someone

told you that there was a pot of gold across the street and all you had to do was cross the street to get it. But there's a lion in the middle of the road. It's a real pot of gold, but it's also a real lion. Your boss can fire you, but you really can protect yourselves if you act as a group. You have to demonstrate the power of a group to people who are afraid.

What are we up against--What do we have going for us?

Make a list of the resources and advantages that the university administration has at its disposal. These include: money, lawyers, media, communication with employees, the power to hire and fire, a good image.

This seems like a pretty tough adversary. On top of these advantages, they also have a full paid staff that does nothing but concern itself with personnel. They have resources to train this staff in management techniques. They belong to clubs and associations that concern themselves with the problems of labor/management relations, such as the Chamber of Commerce Personnel Managers Club, the Boston Survey Group, the Brandeis Survey, and other conferences and journals.

But before you give up, make a list of the things you've got going for you. For one thing, we have the benefit of

the ideas of women's liberation, which are becoming increasingly widespread. We have the legacy of labor struggles which came before us, winning us the eight hour day, minimum wages, health and safety regulations, and laws guaranteeing us the right to bargain and protection from harassment if we try to organize.

We have the benefit of the experience of office workers in other universities and other industries. We have organizations like 9 to 5, the Women's Law Collective, the Mass. Commission Against Discrimination, and unions, which can advise and help us. We have the strength which comes from knowing that justice is on our side. We have numbers. And we have the power of withholding our labor.

We want job satisfaction, fair compensation, and a share in decision-making. The universities need us to work. John Butler, Director of Personnel at Harvard once said "If Harvard could function without employing anyone, we would." Well, they cannot. It's time we received the credit--and working conditions--we're due.