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TUGSA Promotes Gender Equity in Salaries

Jennifer Murphy, Sociology

Working women consistently earn lower wages than working men. Although the gender wage gap has been closing in the past two decades, a woman still earns, on average, about 80 cents for every dollar that a man earns. Female-dominated occupations have lower median salaries than other occupations, but even within the same occupation, women consistently earn lower wages than men doing the same job having the same educational background.

Various factors have contributed to the narrowing of the gender wage gap in certain businesses and industries. Increases in women's participation in the workforce and their movement into higher paid occupations has helped narrow the gap. Another factor affecting the gender distribution of wages in a particular workplace is whether or not the employees have a union. Employees working under a union contract have seen more equality between male and female earnings.

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Temple Graduate Employee Union Fights for Babies

April C. Logan, TUGSA Lead Negotiator

More than 125 member of TUGSA and other unions, as well as undergraduate students and community allies, participated in a February 14 "We'd Love Quality Health Care" rally. TUGSA held the demonstration to pressure the administration to bring more proposals to the table and to educate the public about the health concerns of TAs and RAs as they negotiate their second contract. The administration expressed itself only able to meet with TUGSA once in January, and TUGSA's contract expired the day after the rally, on February 15, 2006. Since the Valentine's Day action, the administration has been much more forthcoming with offers and counterproposals.

TAs and RAs desire several changes to the present coverage: a sub-

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Temple Graduate Employee Union Fights for Babies, cont.

sidy from the administration to provide health coverage for dependents, domestic partners, and spouses; more dental options; a subsidy for child care; year-round health coverage; paid family leave; and dialogue about reopening the campus day care center that was closed in 1995.

Among the inspiring, passionate speakers were TUGSA Co-President Andrew Dixon; TAUP President William Cutler; Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) President Kathy Black; Philadelphia Central Labor Council Labor & Community Liaison Janet Ryder; and Graduate Employees Together at the University of Pennsylvania (GET-UP) Political Director Tina Collins. Philadelphia unions, the Student Labor Action Project and other Temple undergraduate groups, and community organizations such as Jobs With Justice and the United Child Care Union, pledged their support for TAs' and RAs' struggle to win important improvements to their health benefits which would recognize that graduate employees are adults with family responsibilities.

Minimum graduate employee salaries range from about \$13,000 to \$15,000. Yet, a TA or RA must pay \$4,383.18 out of pocket if she wants to place just one dependent on Keystone, the better of the two health insurance plans. If she wants to place a partner and a dependent on her plan, she must pay \$11,169.54 out of pocket. TAs and RAs are, in essence, forced to enroll themselves and their family in CompSelect, which amounts to little more than catastrophic coverage.

TUGSA has a track record of winning health care benefits; it was the first union at Temple University to win the historic option of enrolling a same-sex or opposite-sex domestic partner on an employee's health plan. Before unionization, there was no health insurance subsidy for employees with fractional appointments. In addition, employees paid 32% of the premium for year-round CompSelect single coverage, and 74% of the premium for year-round Keystone single coverage. Today, TAs and Ras pay 0% and 25%, respectively, for the same coverage, and 0% for 9 months of single coverage under either plan.

Temple administration has repeatedly attempted to deny TAs and RAs of their right to organize by alleging that they are only students and not employees. The success of the Baby Day rally is another victory in TUGSA's continuing campaign to ensure that graduate students who are also employees are treated like adults.

TUGSA Promotes Gender Equity in Salaries, cont.

This has proven to be the case at Temple as well, where there is not significant difference in earnings between male and female TAs and RAs. Overall, male graduate employees earn just a small amount on average more than their female counterparts.

Examining the trends within salary grouping also reveal similar results. Currently, TAs and RAs have a minimum salary set according to what discipline they work in (sciences, education/business, arts/humanities). Examining that three-tiered salary system, it becomes apparent that women and men within each tier do not earn significantly different salaries. In the new contract, TUGSA

would like to continue to promote pay equity among TAs and RAs by closing the current gap in salaries between different disciplines.

