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FACTSHEET: President's Ad Hoc Committee on a Living Wage

In the spring of 2002, after a vote by faculty in support of a living wage, Swarthmore College President Al Bloom created a committee of students, faculty, and staff to determine what exactly would constitute a living wage for Swarthmore.

Charge to the Committee:

"A multi-constituent committee is charged with exploring approaches to building further on the progress made in increasing the minimum level of staff compensation at the College. The Committee will report to President Bloom and to the community during the next academic year on its view of what is best for the institution....It is prudent and right to aim at a higher minimum compensation. This new committee will work to suggest ways this could best be packaged and try to identify consequences of a new system."

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1.** The Swarthmore minimum wage should be \$10.72/hour, tied to inflation.
(Minority Recommendation: the Swarthmore minimum wage should be \$13.89/hour.)
- 2.** Swarthmore should introduce a new childcare subsidy benefit of up to \$550/month for preschool-age children and \$325/month for elementary school age children. The College would pay the actual costs of childcare, up to these maxima.
- 3.** Swarthmore should modify its current health insurance benefits such that lowest paid employees receive full HMO coverage for their families at no cost to them.
- 4.** Both the childcare benefit and the health insurance supplement should also be provided to employees whose wages are above the minimum, in amounts determined by a sliding scale that provides full benefit for people earning the College minimum, no benefit for employees earning \$8/hour above the College minimum, and linearly decreasing benefit for employees in between.
- 5.** Both the childcare benefit and the health insurance supplement should be means-tested. The means testing should be done in as simple and transparent a way as possible.
- 6.** The problem of "wage compression" should be addressed by providing wage increases for employees earning up to \$18/hour, on a sliding scale of "decreasing increases."
- 7.** A multi-constituent Employment Practices Advisory Committee should be created to help monitor changes in the workforce in an effort to detect and correct potential unintended negative consequences of the change in the College's compensation policy that are detailed in the report.