

the human rights bulletin at American University

An independent guide to the real AU

<http://humanrightsatau.org>

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As a new student at AU, you may not know some of the details of how the AU world is organized.

When you walk into a dean's office or the financial aid office, you will meet individuals with adequate salaries and some of the best benefit packages outside of Silicon Valley. Their morale should be high and they should be happy to see you.

What exactly are the benefits AU employees—faculty and staff—receive?

- **Free Classes.** Many are here for a free master's degree which they can begin after four months of service; they and their partners enjoy free tuition for one class a semester as long as they work here.
- **Free Tuition for Children.** After their parents work at AU for two years, the children of staff and faculty can attend AU fulltime, undergraduate or graduate school, for free.
- **Tuition Exchange Program.** If their children would like to leave home, and attend college with a large scholarship somewhere else, this is also available to the children of AU staff and faculty through the Tuition Exchange Program with over 500 other colleges and universities.
- **Retirement Accounts.** And the University also provides all fulltime staff and faculty with an extremely generous pension contribution of ten percent a month.



Ms. Leila Williams, age 76, says that she can't afford to retire after 49 years at AU.

Inequality at AU

But there is another side to the AU story. All workers have not been treated equally here for years.

The people who arrive at 6 A.M. to prepare food for your breakfast do not partake in the AU feast of benefits.

- They do not receive free classes for themselves. And as you might expect, they would love free tuition for their children, but they do not receive it.
- They do not receive the same contributions to their retirement accounts given other workers here.

So many of them can't afford to retire now, and must work into their late seventies or older. Ms. Leila Williams said she can't afford to retire. And she is not alone. One 66-year old worker with 38 years at the university has only \$11,000 in her retirement account.

Why are the Service Workers Left Out?

Why are the service workers treated differently than the other workers at the university?

In order to save money on pensions and health benefits, the University subcontracted service work—such as cooking and cleaning—to vendors in the early 1980s.

Since they now work for a vendor, the university has pushed them aside. The university has washed its hands of any responsibility to the service workers since privatization began. It pretends that they are not AU workers.

Zero Contributions to Retirement Accounts in the 1980s and 1990s

What has happened to the retirement accounts?

- Aramark is the current vendor for all food and cleaning services on campus. Aramark now makes a small contribution to the retirement accounts of service workers.
- But Aramark did not create the pension crisis. The crisis dates from the 1980s and 1990s when the vendors on campus made no contributions to service workers' retirement accounts. See <http://tinyurl.com/ov6nl44> for a labor contract with Marriot from the 1990s as an example.
- Marriot and the vendors which followed Marriot made no contributions to the retirement accounts of service workers from the early 80s to around 2005. AU let this happen and has not intervened to help workers who can't retire.

Tuition Remission

Over the years, the university has said that if service workers want tuition remission, just bargain for it with the vendor. But the Aramark can't provide this benefit. Only AU can. When will the university do the right thing?

What Can You Do Today?

Sign up at

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AUHumanRights>

so we can keep in touch with you about demonstrations in support of the service workers at American University.

Join the AU Student Worker Alliance on Facebook.

Learn about the working conditions the cleaners on campus face at Exploited Wonks Blog at AU

<https://exploitedwonks.wordpress.com/>

What Do We Want?

Tuition remission for all service workers and their children.

Help for the older workers with almost empty retirement accounts. The university gave its last president, Benjamin Ladner, a \$3.75 million dollar severance package so AU has money for severance packages. Giving each over 65 year old worker with 30 years of service \$100,000 or a total of \$1.5 million for 15 workers could be done from within the university's \$615 million annual budget without raising tuition.

We ask the senior management on campus, President Neil Kerwin and Provost Scott Bass, to bring these long-standing problems to the attention of the Board of Trustees and persuade them that change is necessary.

Who are we?

We are a faculty and staff support group that will coordinate actions with the service workers, the Student Worker Alliance at AU, Black Lives Matter, and the Exploited Wonks blog. These issues are what the service workers have asked us to publicize and push on campus this year.

More is at

<http://humanrightsatau.org/>

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