



Union News for Members at Universities and Colleges

SEIU Local 615

March 2008

Lesley University Members Join Together

After over twelve years of bargaining attempts, Unico employees at Lesley University successfully unified all of Lesley University's campuses under a new five-year agreement. All of Lesley University's campuses are now covered by a master contract that features: 4% annual wage increases, access to a 401(k) pension plan, and the gradual incorporation of housekeepers into a higher-paying category. The agreement also includes additional sick and vacation days, company contributions to a joint training fund and increased shift differentials. The bargaining team members unanimously ratified the contract.



Lesley-Unico Bargaining Team From left to right: Al Carmona, Dana Fuuler, Micheline Saintil and Adelberto Pina.

MIT Custodians' Petition Forces Management to the Table

In the first week of March, the new manager of facilities at MIT, John DiFava, learned that nearly 200 custodians had signed a petition calling for a meeting with him. The petition circulated after management contracted One Source custodians to do work usually done by in-house custodians.

"If management is having a problem getting the work done, they need to talk to us about it so we can help," said third shift shop steward Mike Valeri.

Fellow steward Tony Anzalone echoed Mike's concerns, "Management never talked to us about this. Outside contractors just showed up one day and that made us angry and worried."

Within days of circulating the petition, shop stewards Virgil Tiago, Mike Valeri and George Fichera and Local 615 organizer Matt Gulish met with Mr. Difava and the custodial managers. Management was apologetic about the way they handled the whole situation and have pledged to cooperate with the Union. Mr. DiFava told the Union delegation that he is committed to keeping the work in-house and offering our members more overtime before going outside to get the work done. In addition, he has told the custodial managers to hire 20 new people.

We're encouraged by what we heard, but there are still a lot of problems left to be worked out. Overtime is not being offered equally and many custodians still find it almost impossible to get their vacation time approved.

The Union and the Institute have agreed to monthly Labor-Management meetings to make sure that the membership participates in decisions that affect their work and that there is open communication on both sides.

The custodians at MIT have shown that when we work together and stand united, they can force management to deal with our concerns.

Overtime Troubles at BU

The day after commencement last May, Area 18 (Bay State Road) custodians were asked to work overtime for move-out cleaning jobs. The custodians made arrangements for babysitters and switched shifts at second jobs in order to be available for the overtime work. At the last minute BU cancelled the overtime, told half the custodians to go home— *and then turned around and brought custodians in from another area to do the same overtime work!*

The Area 18 custodians, led by Manny Paiva, Maria Sebastiao, and Kenney Costa, knew that what BU did was not right and grieved the case all the way to arbitration.

The day before the first arbitration hearing, BU proposed a settlement: they gave the Area 18 custodians who were wrongfully sent home the opportunity to make up the lost overtime hours. The University acknowledged that the Area 18 custodians had the right to the overtime work and also agreed that whenever there is scheduled overtime work within an established group, it has to be offered first to those within the group before being offered on an overtime basis to anyone outside the group.

It is important that all members on both campuses stay vigilant and enforce this important principle.

A similar case involving Trucking and Grounds members on the main campus was heard by an arbitrator in December, 2007. A decision is expected soon.

Three Hurley Workers at Bentley Go Full-Time

After many hours of meetings with Hurley of America management, three part-time workers finally won full-time status at Bentley College. Asuncion Tellez, Lucia Rivera and Altagracia Santana were the only part-time janitors at Bentley. As part-timers, they didn't receive health insurance and all the other benefits that full-time workers have access to.

These three workers had to endure great adversity and fought hard with Hurley to win more hours. Asuncion is the mother of a sick child with a disability that requires special medical attention every day. She depends on her job to care for her child and her family in El Salvador. Lucia Rivera and Altagracia Santana had to work two jobs to make ends meet. Because they needed the benefits, they worked seven days a week to meet the 40-hour week at their other jobs. Now that they have won their full-time status at Bentley (from 28 hours to 40 hours per week) they can work just one job and spend more time with their family.

Meet Bill Sims: MIT's New Shop Steward at the Campus Activities Center

Bill Sims, has a been a custodian and utility worker at MIT for five years. On his decision to become a leader, he says: "I stepped up to be the shop steward to ensure the fair treatment and safety of my fellow workers."

Bill and his wife, Janine, have a five-year-old daughter named Abby.



Vacation Pay Errors at BU

Most part-time custodians at BU work 25-29 hours a week and the University calculates their holiday pay based on the actual hours they worked over the previous year—but vacation pay at BU is based on a flat 20 hours, no matter how many hours a week the custodian actually works. As a result, part-timers at BU have been getting as much as 4 ½ hours less vacation pay than they were entitled to after one year on the job.

To settle a grievance filed by an Area 11 part-time custodian, BU has agreed to fix this problem and pay those who were shortchanged retroactively.

Attention MIT workers: Have you ever been denied a personal day?

If you are an MIT worker and you have been denied a personal day for any reason, please call Local 615 Organizer Matt Gulish at 617-878-7555.

Unicco Workers at Simmons Ratify New Contract

In January 2008, Unicco workers at Simmons College won an excellent five-year contract. With the support of Simmons students and faculty, bargaining members Ilione Ribiera, Sonia Pereira, Lenny Lesard, and Chris Skeens got impressive wage and benefit increases.

Under the new contract, Category A workers won a raise of \$1.25 per hour and Category B workers \$0.70 per hour followed by \$0.30 every six months beginning the following year. Vacancies of part-time positions on the first shift will be combined to create full-time jobs with health insurance coverage. The number of paid sick days jumped from 2 to 4, and will continue to increase to a total of 6 days by the end of the agreement. The day after Thanksgiving will become an additional paid holiday and vacation time will increase after the fifth year. After five years of employment, workers will now get two weeks of unpaid leave. In addition, Unicco will begin to contribute to a training fund that sponsors the workers' English language and computer classes at the Union office, and Unicco's contributions to the pension program will also increase under the new agreement. Finally, the seniority, immigration and "no discrimination" language in the contract was dramatically improved.

The Unicco workers at Simmons would especially like to thank the students, faculty, and alumni for their support, and to specifically recognize the work of Student Labor Action Project leader Elisa Kreisinger and graduate student Joshua Parker for their help to make this round of bargaining a huge success.

New, Easier Application Process for Jobs at BU

Thanks to the grievance of a part-time custodian on the Medical Campus, BU has agreed to simplify the process to apply for new jobs. Now, instead of filling out a separate application every time a new job opening is posted, BU workers only have to fill out **one application, one time.**

The process works like this:

- Fill out one application, anytime, for any shift, position or schedule you want to work.
- When an opening comes up for a job that matches the criteria you listed on your application, you automatically go into a group of applicants.
- In most cases, the job goes to the applicant with the most seniority, and the best attendance and performance in their record.

The same one-time application will be used for those who want to transfer from their current shift or area, or for part-time workers who want to apply for full-time work. This new application process should make the path from part-time to full-time much smoother.

Staff Profile: Wayne Langley



Hi, my name is Wayne Langley and I'm the Acting Director of the Higher Education Division of Local 615. I've been on staff with Local 615 for four years now and I worked for fifteen years with SEIU Local 285/2020 before that.

I was born and raised in Massachusetts and have been an advocate for strong worker rights almost my entire adult life. I'm grateful for the help I've received from our members at the colleges and universities in understanding the issues they face. My goals are:

- To raise the profile of our membership inside the institutions where they work. The schools need to be reminded that our members are just as essential to the successful completion of the educational mission as other staff, whether a manager or professor.
- To increase member participation both as stewards and member political organizers across the division.
- To run strong campaigns for better wages and working conditions at sites where the contracts are expiring in the spring.
- To offer increased steward trainings and apprenticeship opportunities.
- To bring local elected officials to the schools to meet with our members and tell them how they can help us guarantee good jobs for our members and their families.

I welcome the opportunity to work with you and hope you will join me in making this an exciting year in the division.

MIT Steward Training Session: Last Week of March

Shop stewards are the backbone of this Union and Local 615 is committed to giving them the training and resources they need to do their job. At the end of March, the Union is hosting a training session that will help our stewards investigate and resolve grievances, and learn about strategies to organize the membership when the grievance process doesn't work.

At MIT, we have a great mix of experienced stewards and some newer ones. Both will participate in the training session. The experienced stewards will help lead training workshops, teaching the newer stewards how to handle cases based on the real situations they've dealt with in the past. In return, the newer stewards will bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the table.

With this collaboration, the Union is confident that MIT workers will continue to benefit from a united force of motivated, enthusiastic shop stewards.

MIT Management Sends Grandmother Packing

Maria Colceriu, a mother and grandmother, cleaned MIT's dormitories for several years until January, when MIT management abruptly told Acme Pioneer to lay her off. The housing budget and workload in the buildings remained constant, and there was no evident reason for management to take away Ms. Colceriu's job, salary, and health insurance. Local 615 representatives met with MIT's housing manager of SidneyPacific, Jack Ahern, and he reported that management simply decided she was no longer needed. Nobody else in management, including Karen Neilson and Dennis Collins objected to the devastating injustice.

SEIU Local 615 has since confirmed that Acme Pioneer will place Ms. Colceriu at another location, but she will have to take a pay cut and work a different shift. MIT needs to realize that every job is important, both to the Institution and to the workers.



MIT cleaner, Maria Colceriu

Victory for 1st Shift Cleaners at Harvard Business School

Two years ago, Unicco cut 15 minutes from the schedule of a group of first shift employees at the Harvard Business School. Their schedule was cut from 5 hours per day to 4 hours and 45 minutes per day. Im-

mediately after this cut in hours, shop steward Nancy Diaz began to fight back.

With the support of her co-workers and Union organizer, Wellington Lousada, Nancy helped win back the 15 minutes this past October and the group's schedule has been returned to 5 hours per day. Congratulations to Nancy for her tremendous leadership.

Missing Holiday Pay at BU

Two part-time custodians in Area 10 noticed that they did not get paid for the Christmas holiday. They grieved, and it turned out that there were several other part-timers who didn't get paid correctly either. BU admitted it was a payroll mistake and quickly corrected the pay issue.

SEIU Members Endorsed Senator Barack Obama for President

In one of the most important presidential elections workers have ever faced, members of the Service Employees International Union endorsed Sen. Barack Obama for president, calling him the candidate with the best vision, best plan and best strategy to achieve economic justice, quality, affordable healthcare for every American, the freedom for workers to unite in unions, and an end to the Iraq war.