

From Dean Saitta <dsaitta@du.edu>  
Sent Thursday, January 6, 2011 9:47 pm  
To DU AAUP Chapter  
Subject Sodexo Situation Update

Hi all—

Hope your new years are off to good starts. Recall that our chapter has been expressing concern to our administration about Sodexo's treatment of campus food service workers. Yesterday George and I, along with 3 Sodexo workers, had a good meeting with Neil Krauss and Amy King. The workers shared their stories about workplace exploitation and intimidation in very compelling ways. Both Neil and Amy seemed to be genuinely concerned about what they were hearing. Amy was there to suggest options, from an HR perspective, about what the workers could do to empower themselves. Given that the workers have gotten no satisfaction going to their supervisors or Sodexo's HR department, Amy suggested that they could appeal to external agencies like the Department of Labor and EEOC. The workers politely and effectively responded that they have already exercised a fair amount of power (including going to NLRB) to get the company to address their issues. They mentioned that the company has been adept at "covering its tracks", using raises as "hush money", and retaliating against complainants in other subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

At meeting's end we indicated that we'd like the university to do what it can to (1) urge Sodexo to respect and humanely treat its workers in all aspects of their jobs and (2) urge Sodexo to support the workers' legal right to unionize if that is their wish. Drawing on an email conversation that the small number of us most involved in this issue had in advance of the meeting, we suggested that the university also consider (3) establishing a "code of conduct" for its subcontractors that ensures fair and equitable treatment of campus workers and gives the university some leverage in dealing with subcontractors when problems like this arise and (4) creating a standing "labor management committee" (with worker, manager, faculty, student, and other stakeholder representation) to consider grievances, investigate working conditions when complaints arise, etc.

Neil seemed to take these suggestions to heart. He emailed today saying that he will have some discussions with the appropriate senior administrators to determine next steps and report back to us. In the meantime, we're thinking that the AAUP chapter could write a memo to send to the administration within a month or so that formalizes suggestions #3 and #4 above, so that we keep some pressure on. Any thoughts you have about this are welcome!

Cheers,  
Dean

Dean J. Saitta

Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology  
Co-President, Colorado Conference AAUP  
University of Denver  
Sturm Hall 146-S  
2000 East Asbury Street  
Denver, CO 80208  
Phone: 303-871-2680  
Fax: 303-871-2437  
Web: <http://portfolio.du.edu/dsaitta>  
EU-US Atlantis/FIPSE Project: <http://portfolio.du.edu/atlant>  
AAUP at DU: <http://portfolio.du.edu/aaup>