

**Student-Labor Alliances on College Campuses:
Strategies to Empower Workers and Build Community-
Case Studies of Occidental and Other Colleges**

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Summary

Student-Labor Alliances on College Campuses: Strategies to Empower Workers and Build Community- Case Studies of Occidental and other Colleges

College campuses should and often seek to be model ethical institutions. However, there is often much to be desired in terms of appreciating, respecting, and paying adequate wages and benefits to the non-faculty and non-administrative employees at colleges. These employees clean, maintain, and perform the essential duties on campuses that keep a college running smoothly and these employees deserve to be included as an integral part of the college community.

that ensure that all employees will earn a high enough wage to support a family above the poverty line when working full time.

The involvement of employees in the campaigns of student-labor alliances has varied. This is an important factor that this paper considers. While there are different ways to define success, and no one will argue that employees are worse off for having higher wages, it is important to consider whether employees are empowered by the campaign or if students are working on behalf of the employees with little employee interaction or involvement.

The case studies provided in this paper include an example at Wesleyan of a campaign that was focused on a policy outcome. The campaign was successful in bringing higher wages to the employees, but after the campaign was over students regretted that they did not make more of an effort to have the workers organize themselves.¹ They also show an example at Stanford of a student-labor alliance with a broader agenda. Stanford's SLAC (Stanford Labor Action Coalition) has been organizing to get their campus to adopt a Code of Conduct that will inform the colleges interaction and treatment of unions and employees. It is a primary goal of this campaign to empower employees and they have begun a program called Habla la Noche that provides English literacy classes for employees. In addition the group works closely with one of the SEIU locals on their campus and has made a concerted effort to develop relationships with employees.

While Occidental is a quality institution in which most employees are represented by a union there are still issues concerning employees that are lacking. This paper discusses the way the students of Occidental's SLAC (Student Labor Action Coalition)

have identified and taken action around certain issues. SLAC has made efforts to make employees more visible through interviews and articles in the newspaper and we have organized a worker appreciation luncheon to show employees how much student's appreciate their presence on campus. SLAC has set the groundwork for a Community Based Learning program called the Community Literacy Program that will provide further educational opportunities for employees and is designed to create an arena for students and employees to teach and learn from each other. It is the goal of SLAC to help empower employees through additional educational opportunities and to develop stronger relationships between students and employees.

By recognizing all members of Occidental's community as unique, intelligent, hardworking and essential to the college, SLAC is helping Occidental to fulfill its mission statement. One of the four cornerstones of Occidental College is community.

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Background

My first memory of class-consciousness comes from a Dr. Seuss story I used to read as a little kid called The

compensation when he came to the college in 1999³. He also lives in a large house on the top of the hill that Occidental College is built on. Meanwhile an Occidental employee hired under the classification title: dishroom assistant starts at a wage of \$8.79 an hour⁴, which works out to \$18,283 a year. Some of

to 15 hours a week working with the custodi

done at Occidental I hope that my efforts and the efforts of SLAC have helped to set Occidental on a path toward a stronger community.

Introduction

Student-labor alliances are prominent throughout the college campuses of the US. They have recognized that many of the staff of college campuses are not being given an adequate voice on campus and are not being compensated adequately for their work. The purpose of this report is to determine if student-labor alliances are contributing to greater justice on college campuses. The criteria used for evaluation includes the outcomes and processes associated with the campaign (for instance is it successful in creating higher wages for employees or additional educational opportunities). Of particular interest is whether the campaigns are successful in empowering employees, or whether the students involved in a campaign usurp the voice of the employees.

This paper discusses five case studies of student-labor alliances on college campuses, with a particular focus on Occidental College. In addition the student-labor alliances at Harvard, Wesleyan, Stanford, and Georgetown are used as case studies. The information about the case studies comes from published documents, websites of the

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not raised. Another problem with the minimum wage is that increases in productivity are ignored when establishing the minimum wage, allowing for the owners and CEOs to absorb all of the benefits. Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce argue that if the 1968 minimum wage were adjusted for increases in productivity and inflation the 2000 minimum wage would have been \$13.80 an hour.⁷

Currently the living wage movement does not have enough support to win a national campaign, so it has focused on winning local victories in the form of city ordinances and state minimum wages that are higher than the federal minimum wage. These city ordinances vary, but usually require that all city employees and employees of businesses with city contracts receive a living wage and sometimes require that businesses receiving a certain amount of assistance from the city pay a living wage. In 1994 an alliance between labor and religious leaders conducted a campaign for a living wage in Baltimore. The campaign achieved the first living wage law requiring that city service contractors pay a living wage. Since then living wage campaigns have been conducted in cities, counties, and campuses across the country. Currently there are 123 living wage laws dispersed through communities across the country.⁸

⁵ Clawson, Dan. The Next Upsurge. Ithaca: Cornell, 2003.

⁶ Waltman, Jerold. The Case for the Living Wage. New York: Algora, 2003.

⁷ Pollin, Robert and Stephanie Luce. The Living Wage. New York: The New Press, 1998.

⁸ "Living Wage Successes." The Living Wage Resource Center. 6 Dec. 2004.
<<http://www.livingwagecampaign.org/index.php?id=1958>>.

The Los Angeles Living Wage

Los Angeles created the country's third living wage law in 1997 and has placed Los Angeles at the forefront of the movement. The ordinance was the first to factor in health care benefits, a provision that has since been adopted by numerous cities. It has raised living standards for the 10,000 employees covered by the ordinance. The wage was initially set at \$8.50 an hour for employees without health benefits and \$7.25 an hour if the employer was contributing a minimum of \$1.25 an hour to benefits. Another provision of the ordinance stipulated that employers provide at least twelve paid days off for sick leave or vacation. The wage is adjusted each year to correspond with adjustments to the retirement benefits of the City Employees Retirement System⁹ and is currently \$8.53 plus \$1.25 benefits, or \$9.78 without benefits. According to Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy's website the ordinance applies to businesses in four categories: "Those which have service contracts with the city, lease land from the city, require city operating permits, or receive city financial assistance."¹⁰

The campaign for the Los Angeles living wage was conducted by the Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition (LWC), an organization made up of workers, labor organizations, community and faith-based groups and academics. The non-profit organization, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), managed the campaign. An additional provision, agreed to as part of the effort to line up sufficient votes, was an analysis to be commissioned by the city on the projected financial impact of a living wage ordinance. In order to get the ordinance passed the LWC agreed to comply with the

⁹ "Ordinance No. 172336" Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. 5 Dec. 2004.
<http://www.laane.org/lw/legislation.html#la_lwo>

recommendations of the analysis and lower the base wage and the minimum benefits.

value level. The campus living wage movement has spread to college campuses because students believed their schools should be highly principled institutions that treat all members of their community fairly. Also, people need to realize that a living wage is in the long-term interest of the country as a whole.

Campus Living Wage Campaigns and Student-Labor Alliances

Campus living wage campaigns have been spawned from both the living wage campaigns of campuses' local cities and from the consciousness that was raised by the student anti-sweatshop movement. The anti-sweatshop movement arose when students awoke to the poor working conditions their institutions were supporting through the purchase and sales of sweatshop clothes. Eventually students turned their focus to the

3. Does the campaign primarily involve already unionized employees? If so what is the relationship between the students and the union? If not, is getting a union on campus

campaign. Students were by and large the spokespeople and planners of the campaign, though with the input of the employees.

The administration at Harvard has been opposed to the Harvard Living Wage Campaign since it began. Former President Neil Rudenstine and Provost Harvey Fineburg refused a request to meet with students to discuss the idea of a living wage policy in February of 1999. To build campus support and put pressure on the administration to meet with students the campaign held its first of many rallies, but their request was still ignored. The Cambridge City Council also put pressure on Harvard by passing an order urging Harvard to implement a living wage. Nearly two years into the campaign, the students organized their first meeting with union representatives. The unions agreed to attempt to establish living wage language in their next contract.

The campaign climaxed when fifty students occupied Massachusetts Hall, which contains the administration offices. The sit-in lasted three weeks and involved lots of student, faculty, and worker support on the outside. The action sought to include the voices of employees. In addition to giving the employees opportunities to speak themselves, the students in the sit-in read written pieces aloud that were authored by the employees and concerned with the hardships they faced at Harvard. To show their support for the sit-in students a group of Harvard employees delivered pizzas to the students inside. The Harvard campaign was unique in how much media and public attention it received. The union was in full support of the student's efforts. The campaign was seen by labor as a landmark and as a result it drew, John Sweeney, head of the AFL-CIO and the spokesmen for the labor movement in America, who made an appearance and spoke in support of the students involved in the campaign and a living

wage policy. It came to an end when the students reached an agreement with the University. The University agreed to:

Create a committee with faculty, administrators, students, and workers, charged with studying Harvard's labor policies and recommending changes by December 2001; to announce a moratorium on outsourcing until the committee's deliberations are complete; and to renegotiate a contract with the janitors' union in early 2002.¹²

The contract signed by the union representing dining hall employees in 2002 increased starting wages for many workers in the union from \$9 an hour to \$10.85. While a significant victory, this is st

speed and anonymity of voting in support of creating a union through the card check method prevents employers from using methods of intimidation to resist the formation of a union, such as firing employees that are believed to be leading the drive to form a union. To find out who is in favor of a union and to pit employees against each-other employers will sometimes promote certain employees with the agreement that they will inform on their other employees. Another union-busting tactic often used by employers

my initial research I found that Stanford's president, John Hennessey, had established a living wage policy using the wage level set by the living wage ordinance of the local town of San Jose. The policy required that the major university contractors with non-unionized employees pay workers at least \$10.10 an hour with health benefits and \$11.35 without. The policy was formed to pacify those involved in efforts to improve the

unsympathetic students, and conservative faculty and staff. As a result, as mentioned before, the policy that they came up with and was then put into place did not alleviate the injustices that were taking place at Stanford.

SLAC does not see Stanford's living wage policy as a success because of its inadequacies and continues its focus on other issues while working with the SEIU locals. The goal behind the Code of Conduct campaign is not one single issue; it is about changing the relationship between the college and the employees so that employees are more secure and more valued. SLAC believes many fundamental changes need to be made to accomplish this. They believe Stanford needs to create a process by which employees have input in the policies that affect them. They also have focused on ensuring that employees have access to educational opportunities that are desired. Many schools, including Stanford, allow for employees to attend classes at their respective university. However, for many reasons employees rarely attend the classes that are for the students of the college. Often the employees are working during these hours, the

the process of petitioning the college to provide a worker center on campus that will provide employees with computer access and will be a permanent place for employee classes. Other issues SLAC has worked on include providing day care for employees and getting the college to pay for the tuition of the employees if they attend the college.

The relationship SLAC has with the SEIU locals on its campus, in particular with SEIU Local 715 (United Stanford Workers) is essential to the Code of Conduct campaign. It provides the mechanism by which SLAC's members can learn about the concerns employees have that they can address and what issues they can work with the employees on that are outside the boundaries of the union. It also keeps all parties informed on what the others are doing and when they can help. One member of Stanford's SLAC, Molly Anne Goldberg, described to me how SLAC has communicated with the United Stanford Workers Local:

Their president, Zev Kivity, comes to as many of our meetings as he can, many of us have his cell number and call him with any questions, and we have a good relationship with the organizers, as well,

the administration agreed to a "Just Employment Policy for Georgetown University"¹⁴

have casual weekly worker breakfasts from six to eight in the morning. They also started English as a Second Language Classes for the employees. The major issue that the coalition identified on campus and sought to address with their campaign was the unequal treatment of the contracted employees. According to Ginny Leavell of the Living Wage Coalition the workers who were employed by subcontractors were receiving significantly less wages while doing the same work as employees hired directly by the college.

It was important to the student members of Georgetown to empower employees and identify leaders who could organize their fellow employees. Ginny offered an example in which employees came to the Coalition because many of them did not have the ID cards they needed to get into the buildings at night. The students could have easily gotten the ID cards for the employees, but opted to have the employees gone to management themselves. This allowed the employees to work together and achieve a small victory when they got the cards. Though there are two SEIU locals on the campus, the Coalition did not work much with them until late in the campaign.

In the fall of 2001, early in the campaign's history, the Living Wage Coalition created a committee with the administration to look into the issue of wages on campus. Creating a committee is a common occurrence in living wage campaigns, and though it may seem like a victory, it often seems to

the Living Wage Coalition never invested much hope in the committee saying they "took it for what it was." Still, the committee was useful when the Living Wage Coalition

Occidental's Student-Labor Alliance 2004-2005

Introduction

Though different tactics have been used at different colleges, all the students involved in these campaigns have acted out of a desire to make their institutions treat all their employees fairly. Many students that eventually get involved in these campaigns come to college unaware of labor issues, but then start to build relationships with employees on their campuses. I became aware of labor issues on my campus when I began a student job with the cleaning service employees at Occidental. Other students might begin learn of labor issues through conversations with the employee that cleans their hall. Through relationships and conversations students become aware of the too frequent low-wages that afflict their college's employees. When I became aware of this issue at Occidental, I was indignant that despite all the progressive rhetoric of my college, the school was engaging in unethical employer practices. I felt I had no choice but to get involved.

For me the question of whether to have a living wage is primarily a value issue.

between students and employees. The stronger the community the more friction the administration will receive if it is treating one part of the community unfairly. Ultimately paying a living wage to all employees should be a necessity just as having a clean school, a service provided by employees, is also a necessity. Currently Occidental pays its employees in the union above what the Los Angeles Living Wage Law defines as a Living Wage for this area. However, the temporary employees that are not in the union are paid less than this and receive no health benefits. Also, I believe the Los Angeles Living Wage is too low for the high cost of living in this area.

At Occidental College and other campuses having a good relationship with the employees of the college and a community that includes the employees can be a selling point. Occidental sells a progressive image by advertising its diversity, its anti-sweatshop policy, and just recently it had its former student, Barack Obama, on the cover of its magazine. Paying a living wage could be part of this image. After all, one of the cornerstones of Occidental's mission statement is equity. It defines equity for the college as,

Respect for and the practice of justice, fairness and integrity-- the belief that no attribute such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age or physical ability should impair anyone's access to or enjoyment of any feature of Occidental College.¹⁶

By improving conditions for the employees of Occidental the college would help fulfill its belief in equity and further its reputation as a progressive institution, but more importantly it would be making an ethical decision. This is important to keep in mind, as the issue of ethics needs to be the first priority.

Occidental's Student-Labor Alliance

Similar to other campus living wage campaigns, students and not the employees initiated a living wage campaign at Occidental College. The Student Labor Action Coalition decided to start a living wage campaign for the employees of Occidental when several members expressed an interest in such a campaign. Over time the campaign has morphed into a more general campaign in the interest of improving the quality of life of the employees on campus and building a stronger coalition between the employees and the students of Occidental. As we have become more informed the complexities of the campaign have been revealed. This is my story of Occidental's student-labor alliance.

It has been our goal as a student-labor alliance to serve the needs of employees in areas that are primarily outside of the conventional realm of the union. This is not to say that the union cannot or should not be involved in the areas we are active in and that we cannot or should not be involved in the conventional activities of the union. On the contrary, the union can play a supportive role in our activities, as they did with an employee appreciation lunch that SLAC organized, and likewise students can help support the union. Our goal is to make employees a more visible and acknowledged presence, to build community by fostering relationships between students and employees, and to ensure that they have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

Our role as students in support of workers on campus is complex. In the case studies provided earlier there are examples of campus groups organizing on behalf of the workers with little worker input or involvement. The issue with this type of organizing is that it does not serve the goal of empowering employees. While it is the place of students to organize to show their appreciation of employees, when it comes to issues around

¹⁶ Occidental College web site: < <http://www.oxy.edu/x2640.xml> >

wages and benefits worker's needs are better served when they pick and make the decisions involved in a campaign. This creates a sense of empowerment that has meaning beyond the scope of a campaign. Still, college campuses are unique environments in which students have the ability to be in the spotlight of a campaign without the risks that employees of a school do. United for a Fair Economy describes this situation in its Campus Living Wage Manual, which states that the decision to have a campaign is ultimately the decisions of the employees on campus. However, "While workers are the focus and should come first, students will be the backbone of the campaign itself. Students generally have more free time. Most of us don't have families to go home to at night, we haven't been working an 8-hour shift.¹⁷" Still, worker empowerment should be taking place every step of the way and students should make sure that they are not doing things that the employees can do themselves.

uncomfortable voicing grievances or engaging in a dialogue with students because of an inability or discomfort with speaking English.

The campaign began in September. At the first SLAC meeting we formed three areas of interest and divided ourselves into respective groups. There was an anti-sweatshop group, a kick-Coke-off campus group, and a living wage group. I joined the living wage group for a few reasons. For one thing I had just been hired as a student employee with facilities and would be cleaning dorms and taking out garbage with the employees on campus. Thus I felt like I could be an asset to the campaign. Also, throughout my stay at Occidental I have felt a deep gratitude for the employees that are essential to the life of the campus. They do the grit work on campus with grace and too often receive no thanks. The idea of working with these employees to make them a more visible and respected part of the Occidental community drew me to this issue.

The first meetings we had we set our goals and they seemed tangible. We wanted a living wage policy on campus. We assumed, naturally, that the employees would also want a living wage policy. So the next step was to find out if this was an important issue for employees and to get their input in developing a policy. Then, if we got the go ahead, we would bring our demands to the administration at Occidental where we would either work out some kind of deal or would mobilize student support until our demands were met. It soon became apparent that this was not going to be so easy, starting by assessing if the employees even wanted the college to adopt a living wage policy. Problems included that we did not know most of the employees and even if we were to talk with employees we did not know whether they would want to talk with us about wages, health benefits and working conditions. So we decided that we needed to strengthen our

relationships with the employees on campus. On October 27 we decided to host an employee appreciation luncheon. This was something we had discussed doing before and seemed like a good idea for many reasons. Most importantly it would be an expression of how much the students at Occidental value the employees on campus. It would make SLAC more visible to the employees on campus and let them know that they had support from students. It would give us a chance to get to know some of the employees on

human resources, to pursue having an extra half-hour of lunch for the employees at Occidental on the day of the luncheon. We believed that the normal half-hour given to employees for lunch would not be sufficient on this day because many employees work a good distance from the building where the event was being held.

At the meeting Mr. Ledwin brought up the survey that SLAC was considering having the employees fill out at the event. The goal of the survey was to get a sense of how the employees felt about the environment at Occidental and insight into what their wages and benefits were. We also wanted to identify any problems they were having and see if there were any services that we could help provide them. For example, questions on the survey included: "Are you interested in receiving English classes on campus?" and "Are you interested in receiving library cards?" At the meeting with Mr. Ledwin the SLAC representatives were surprised when Mr. Ledwin confronted them about the survey. Mr. Ledwin stated that such a survey would infringe upon the contract between the union and the college. He also accused the students of working with another union, an unfounded allegation. Mr. Ledwin also intimidated the younger students at the meeting, telling them that they did not want to jeopardize their future at Occidental. Mr. Ledwin refused to support the event on the grounds that the survey was illegal and that we were being selective in the employees we were inviting by not including secretaries and clerical workers. When the students agreed to invite all employees and to not have the survey Mr. Ledwin still refused to grant the extra half-hour.

With time running out before Thanksgiving break and the date of the luncheon we decided to circulate a petition to show student and faculty support for the event. As SLAC member Molly Russel said in her email to the rest of us it was, "TIME TO

event I still occasionally hear from an employee how much it meant to them. It also has helped to open a dialogue between the empl

is not active in. While working in cleaning services employees would occasionally come to me wanting help in using a computer. I would meet them after work in the library to assist them in getting whatever they needed done. I also talked to several employees that were interested in taking English classes. The problem was that the employees could not always afford the classes and it was difficult for an employee that works full-time and has a family to find time for classes. When I realized how much interest employees had in classes that would serve their needs I became interested in starting a student-run program that would serve the needs of the employees of Occidental. I have been working with Monica Leitner and Thomas Boatwright in designing a Center for Community Based Learning program. Recently we have begun working with the Spanish and Education Departments in designing the program. The purposes of the program will be multifold. Most importantly it will provide the employees of Occidental with a free and convenient classes that will further their education. Also, it will help to empower workers by increasing their English language skills. From talking to workers I have learned that language is a consistent barrier for employees when a problem arises or in communicating with management. It will also help strengthen the community of Occidental by fostering relationships between employees and students. One class in particular will be effective in achieving this final goal. It will be a reciprocal teaching and learning language exchange where an employee will tutor students in Spanish conversation and the student will then tutor the employees in English. This language intercambio will allow student and employee to learn from each other. We hope that all of the classes in the program will be effective in giving students and employees an opportunity to get to know each other better in addition to providing a quality education.

We have met with the Spanish and Education Departments and the CCBL to begin designing the program, which will start in the fall with the language intercambio class and computer classes taught in Spanish. The Spanish Department will offer an independent study for students that want to be involved in the program as well as offering participation in the program as a component of some of the department's classes. The education department will be providing the space for the program and will be assisting the student leaders of the program in developing an English as a Second Language Class for the near future.

The Student Labor Action Coalition became aware that the school was employing several temporary employees, some of whom the school has been employing for several years. As temporary employees these employees are not part of the bargaining unit and thus receive lower wages and no benefits. According to the union contract the school can only employ a temporary employee for 480 hours in an academic year. However, if the temporary employee is replacing a regular employee on an authorized leave of absence the college can continue indefinitely to employ them as a temporary. This is the situation that the temporary employees who have been with Occidental for several years are in. We have been pursuing ways in which temporary employees can be advanced to permanent positions and make the wages of temporary employees equal to those of permanent employees doing comparable work.

Another issue we have only begun to look into is occupational safety. From speaking to Professor Robert Gottlieb I became aware that Materials Safety Data Sheets are required to be accessible to employees during their work shift. According to OSHA the Hazard Communication Standard requires that, "MSDSs must be readily accessible

and there must be no barriers to employee access during the work shift. The Agency interprets the term 'readily accessible' to mean immediate access to MSDSs."¹⁸ I decided to look into the matter myself and asked employees if they knew where MSDSs were located. So far I have found no data sheets. In addition, employees I have spoken to are largely unaware of the MSDSs and are concerned about the chemicals they are working with. Whether or not the MSDS located somewhere on campus is not responsive to its right to know intent if the employees are unaware of their presence on campus. One employee also brought up that the college had not followed through r1sits promise to

study on the cleaning products at Occidental with the goal of converting to green

7am. He ends up spending 12 hours each day dedicated to this school. The employees give so much to the college and are not currently being recognized enough by the Occidental community.

Conclusion

The College campus is a vital arena for the struggle to provide all members of society with a decent quality of life. The pay scales on campuses, similar to broader American society, are implicitly racist and sexist. Jobs such as cleaning services that are disproportionately held by women and people of color are the lowest paid. By creating stronger communities that are inclusive of all levels of employees and giving all employees a living wage, campuses can provide a model for the rest of America. It also teaches students from all backgrounds the importance of respecting all members of society. This is an important lesson for individuals as they begin to decide what their role in society will be and one that might go unnoticed if employees do not have a strong voice on campus. I applaud all the efforts of students involved in the struggle to improve worker rights for their recognition of injustices on their campus and their efforts to bring about change. From reading about and talking with some of the leaders of the student-labor alliance campaigns and from my own experience I have found that it is always a learning process. Often times it is not until after an action that you realize what the impact of that action will be or you understand that a different avenue would have done more to empower employees. To help facilitate this learning process it is important that the student-labor alliances throughout the country are working together and learning from each other.

As part of the student-labor

fighting against, denying workers their voice. Thus we must continue to focus on the process as well as the outcomes of our campaigns.

Students often start living wage campaigns because they are in a unique position where they can advocate for employees and receive little or no negative consequences. Also, the media is more likely to cover students if they protest than employees. Workers on the other hand often feel powerless, even if they are in a union and if they are at an institution that promotes its values. They fear that if they organize the college will stigmatize them and they might lose their job. Another reason that employees are often only marginally involved in these campaigns that is often overlooked is that it is much more difficult to work with employees and get employees to organize themselves than to simply organize fellow students. For students to work with employees it often requires students to overcome barriers such as language, class, and culture. This can be very challenging, but if the effort is made the campaign will benefit greatly as will the students.

Having employees only marginally involved in campaigns that will primarily impact the employees clearly has inherent problems. Dan Clawson writes of living wage campaigns that:

These campaigns have the potential problem to remove responsibility and control from the people most concerned, the workers themselves...The course of the struggle depends on students or community activists; they decided what the priorities should be and they are the ones involved in a transformative process of struggle.¹⁹

When the workers are not leading the struggle they cannot determine the goals of the campaign which will impact them. Students or community activists might get the needs of the workers wrong. For example a college living wage campaign might result in

raising workers wages a miniscule amount, when what the workers really wanted was free childcare.

Also, when not leading the campaign the employees are not empowered by the campaign. When they are on the periphery of a campaign they are once again being marginalized, which is precisely what these campaigns should be working against. The employees might receive better wages, but they will not have skills and the organization necessary to represent themselves in the future. By conducting a campaign without the input and involvement of the employees students would be engaging in a self-satisfying project, as good as their intentions might be. For students, and often student organizations, are only on a campus for a few years and will not necessarily be around when the employees have a problem or to ensure that changes are implemented. Thus the only way true change occurs is when workers gain the skills to represent themselves. Olivia Debree, a student involved in organizing Wesleyan University's living wage campaign, critiqued their own campaign for its lack of employee involvement:

I think actually in retrospect, that because of the way we organized we kind of reproduced this power relation, between people who have money, have an education, and those who don't, and us telling them what they needed... It's created a situation where the workers are dependent, when I don't think that they would be in this position if we had taken some other route.²⁰

Occidental's SLAC needs to address this issue by involving workers in the campaign as much as possible. If out of fear of losing their jobs or being mistreated by management they do not want to be at the head of a campaign, then, at the very least, we must ensure that their needs are the ones the students are addressing. We must ensure that the students are not projecting what we think they should want onto them. Ideally the

¹⁹ [The Next Upsurge](#). 188

²⁰ [The Next Upsurge](#).

campaign will empower employees and students, while creating strong bonds between them.

Still, despite their differences, all the campaigns discussed in this report improved the conditions for workers at their respective institutions. It is clear that colleges have a tendency to exploit their staff, even when they have ample funds. According to the Harvard Living Wage campaign the cost of implementing a living wage was, "Less than one-half of one percent of the annual interest on Harvard's endowment."²¹ Still the administration continued to stubbornly resist a living wage, even when the college community and city of Cambridge demanded it. The Associate Vice President for Human Resources, Polly Price even said, "The issue has never been about money. Harvard could do this...in a heartbeat."²²

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Swarthmore: Harris 518-461-1347

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Western Michigan: emily 269-873-0625

Oberlin: Emma 919-619-9935

Duke: Bridget Newman 919-218-7604

Stanford: Molly, mollyg2@stanford.edu 802-522-3321

1. The "Campus Living Wage Manual" by United for a Fair Economy. Available for download at: < http://www.faireconomy.org/activist/tools/campus_manual/>
2. Acorn's Living Wage web site at: <<http://www.livingwagecampaign.org/>> It has good information on the history and current status of the Living Wage Movement, including details on living wage policies.
3. The Economic Policy Institute Web Site includes a "Basic Family Budget Calculator" that offers more realistic data on the annual salary needed for different types of families to get by than the federal poverty line by taking into account the cost of living in communities throughout America. For a single parent with two children to be out of poverty, EPI calculates that a salary of \$34,839 or greater is needed. It is located at: < http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/datazone_fambud_budget>
4. Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy's (LAANE) website at:

SLAC hosts first student-initiated worker luncheon

by Lilliane Ballesteros and Alessandro Morosin

The Student Labor Action Coalition (SLAC) hosted the first student-initiated worker appreciation lunch in Oxy's history last Friday. One hundred Occidental employees from dining services, facilities and offices attended the event in Lower Herrick. With food contributions from several individual students, the Associated Students of Occidental College, Asian Pacific Islander Alliance, MEChA/ALAS, Chilcott/Erdman Hall, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, many other clubs and a financial sponsorship from President Ted Mitchell, the brunch-style luncheon was open to all campus workers from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Setting a precedent for the future

SLAC members feel they made a difference in the lives of the workers and changed the mood on campus by putting a face on the college's employees. The event enjoyed broad support, as the club placed cards with quotes from 15 students who expressed gratitude to Oxy's staff on each table.

"We the students don't generally see the workers here out of uniform," SLAC member Clayton Perry (senior) said. "We don't see their families, their kids or their daily lives outside of what they do here to serve us. Please remember that the next time you get antsy because your calzone isn't ready as fast as you want it to be."

The meals included enchiladas, rice and beans, empenadas, chicken stir-fry, pan dulce, noodles, cake and more. SLAC members even stopped by Facilities later that afternoon to offer leftovers.

"The luncheon was incredibly empowering and inspiring for the students and employees," said SLAC member Molly Russell (senior). "This is setting a precedent for semesters to come. It is my goal to work collaboratively with Human Resources and the administration in supporting an annual student-initiated and catered lunch for the employees that make this campus run," said Russell.

Persistence brings progress

Though student organizing produced an event that surpassed the expectations of most SLAC members, the battle to secure the appreciation lunch did not proceed without some hurdles. SLAC won a major victory when President Ted Mitchell extended all Occidental employees' paid lunch from 30 minutes to a full hour just two days before the event.

Three weeks earlier, club leader Jenna Lippe-Klein (junior) had requested that Mitchell extend lunch hour for Oxy workers in order for them to have sufficient time to eat and mingle. In a two-line email, Director of Human Resources Richard Ledwin later informed her that the college applauded the students' efforts on behalf of the staff, but could not extend the workers' lunchtime due to logistical concerns and fairness. The email said it would be difficult to serve the student body if all workers had an hour lunch break, and furthermore, an extended lunch hour to lower level employees would unfairly exclude upper level employees.

In response on behalf of SLAC, Lippe-Klein offered to open the luncheon to all non-faculty employees on campus, including office workers and management, but was still denied the extension.

After this rejection, SLAC and student supporters circulated a petition that received 713 signatures from students and faculty in 48 hours insisting that the college extend the workers' lunch from 30 minutes to one hour.

SLAC members Laura Knuttunen (freshman), Lippe-Klein and Russell presented this petition to Ledwin at a 90-minute meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 23. At that meeting, Ledwin said he would notify department head managers to be lenient in letting the employees return from the luncheon after their 30-minute break. During the meeting, Ledwin revealed that he had received word of a survey the group was planning to give to workers that set off "red flags" about SLAC's "ulterior motives" behind the luncheon.

In an interview, Ledwin refused to tell *The Occidental Weekly* the name of the individual who allegedly alerted him about the survey, which had only been seen over email by several SLAC members. Ledwin said he never saw the survey.

Lippe-Klein said the survey's purpose was "to engage with the employees on a different level and try to understand who

they were as employees and members of our community."

Ledwin claimed the survey represented a breach of contract on the college's part because SLAC is not part of the bargaining unit between the Oxy employees and Teamsters local 911 and cannot, therefore, attempt to bargain on behalf of the 105 campus workers covered by the contract. Pasadena-based labor lawyer Glenn Rothner called that assertion "nonsense."

"The bargaining agreement establishes wages, hours and working conditions," said Rothner, whose regular clients include a variety of labor unions. "Asking the workers

how they feel about those conditions, their work, whether there's a need for improvements ... is done routinely by academics, private research organizations, students and journalists in unionized and non-union workplaces."

Ledwin told the SLAC members on Nov. 23 that the college supported the lunch itself on the condition that there was to be no survey, which SLAC agreed to.

SLAC feels the administration misjudged the survey's motives, but remains grateful to President Mitchell for his eventual public support.

"The survey was completely misunderstood by the administration," said Russell. "The original purpose of the survey was to increase student knowledge and awareness about employees' perception of the Oxy work environment."

Ledwin told the group he assumed they were working on behalf of the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU), a separate labor union. He later said he has seen outside unions use students to interrupt a college's relations with its existing bargaining partner.

"We were extremely shocked," said Russell, who said SLAC has no relations with SEIU. "We felt like he was jumping to huge conclusions to sidestep the fact that over 700 students were asking the administration to extend the half-hour lunch period," said Russell.

Ledwin also made a few remarks that the students saw as uncalled for and intimidating, among them, "If something goes wrong, there will be lots of ears and eyes, and it will disturb the relationship between SLAC and the Oxy administration."

In addition, Lippe-Klein, Russell and Knuttunen all said that Ledwin had warned Knuttunen and Lippe-Klein that they would not want to jeopardize their future at Occidental. Knuttunen said she loved Oxy for its emphasis on community, but did not feel so welcome now.

"I feel very intimidated because I interpret Richard Ledwin's comments as threats. I feel even more uncomfortable because he suggested vague consequences," Knuttunen said.

When asked if he had threatened the students with this choice of words, Ledwin replied, "I have nothing to threaten them with."

Human Resource's Senior Associate Director/Benefit Administrator Jacalyn Feigelman had taken notes at the Nov. 23 meeting, but said she could not be of assistance in confirming whether Ledwin had warned the students not to jeopardize their stay at Occidental.

With support mounting from students, faculty and Hospitality Services, Mitchell met with SLAC members Will Meade (senior), Lippe-Klein, Russell, Knuttunen and Thomas

Boatwright (freshman) for 15 minutes on Wednesday, Dec. 1. As the students were walking to Coons to meet Mitchell, they ran into Ray Whitmer, the Teamsters 911 treasurer. Whitmer and SLAC were invited to that meeting unbeknownst to each other.

At the meeting, Mitchell made it clear thaty -1.145 TD0 Tc0 w()Tc0 Twt tdid ob2 Dec.off were

"Events such as this one are important. A big job satisfaction factor for Campus Dining employees is how much positive interaction there is with students," said Director of Hospitality Services Amy Munoz.

Most appreciative of the event, however, were the workers themselves. One employee told Perry he even cried during the lunch.

"We are very grateful for this gesture of love. I speak for myself, but I also speak for my co-workers when I say that we thank the students very much for giving us this luncheon," said Lucila Castillo, facilities worker for Pauley and Bell-Young Residence Halls.

Tiger Cooler cashier Maria Barrera echoed this gratitude.

"I'm very thankful to Ted Mitchell for complying with the students for that extra half hour," said Barrera. "The food was delicious and the students were very attentive in welcoming us."

Student Awareness of Oxy's Labor Issues

by Alessandro Morosin, Lilliane Ballesteros, and William Meade

With contract negotiations likely to resume in less than a year for Oxy's union members in Facilities and Campus Dining, more students are becoming curious to know what's on the minds of the employees whose labor helps the college run. The Weekly talked to a range of both union and non-union workers in these sectors, as well as administrators, to gain a better picture of what it's like to work at Occidental.

Late last semester, the Student Labor Action Coalition (SLAC) hosted an appreciation luncheon for Occidental workers where clubs such as MEChA/ALAS, Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (APIA), and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship joined together in preparing dishes for the event. Individual students also helped with the luncheon by cooking and serving food for workers. The luncheon, a first step made by Oxy students to build a relationship with campus workers, highlighted the growing interest in labor issues on campus. Throughout the year, similar efforts have been made, although they are not immediately as visible as the luncheon.

Recently, SLAC has been looking into the details of the college's contract with Teamster Local 911, the union that employees in Dining Services and Facilities Management chose to represent them in 1978. They have discovered that change, though subtle, is underway.

The beginning of a stronger relationship between students and union workers?

When asked to comment on the role of Campus Dining and Facilities Management employees in the Oxy community, Director of Communications James Tranquada spoke favorably of the role these individuals play in maintaining the high standards of service expected by the college.

“College employees in general, and employees in Dining Services and Facilities Management in particular, provide essential support for the ongoing and highly successful daily operations of the College. They personify our commitment to the highest service standards,” Tranquada said.

While most people at Oxy would agree with this statement, the luncheon made this gratitude tangible for the workers.

“[After the luncheon, most employees] felt ‘Gee, there is a decent-sized group out there that does really care about us and about the efforts that we put forth for the students,’” said Perez.

The effort to build a bond between students and workers on campus has extended into this semester, and SLAC plans to make the worker appreciation luncheon an annual event. The group is currently creating a website where Oxy students can learn about campus, national and international labor issues (under construction at <http://clubs.oxy.edu/slac/> along with other projects aimed at incorporating campus employees into the school’s social fabric.

The language barrier, much of the work force primarily speak Spanish, tends to cloud communication when union members try to bring their concerns to Perez. He admits that since he’s not fluent in Spanish “by any stretch of the imagination,” he has had to ask other employees to help translate the workers’ concern into English. At times, this creates problems because the matters being brought up are sometimes confidential.

An employee in cleaning services, who wished to remain anonymous and has worked at the college for more than a decade, added that the language barrier makes it difficult for the principally Spanish-speaking cleaning services staff to file grievances without a translator.

A group of SLAC members recognized a desire among many members of the cleaning services staff to improve their English skills. They responded by designing a Language Intercambio program that is scheduled to begin in the fall. Boatwright and Monica Leitner (sophomore) have been working with Professor Guillen of the Spanish Department, Professor Carsillo of the Education department, and Maria Macdonald of the CCBL in designing the program, which will involve Spanish-speaking employees and English-speaking students tutoring each other in their respective languages. The students are also planning to provide computer classes instructed in Spanish for the employees.

Health care: a “major sticking point” in union negotiations

The union’s purpose is to provide employees with a stronger collective voice on workplace issues. The aforementioned employee said that without the union, the administration might lower her salary and that the employees “wouldn’t have the same benefits.” Still, she did not have many positive things to say about Teamsters Local 911. Her financial situation has gotten more difficult in recent years. When she started working, she was earning \$6 an hour. By 1996, her wages had increased significantly, going up by \$1.50. Since then, her hourly wages have been increasing by about 15-20 cents a year. However, she added that the rising cost of health insurance has been hard on employees, especially the single parents.

Perez definitely agrees that the union has had to “fight for every inch” in recent negotiations with President Ted Mitchell and Vice President of Finance Harold Hewitt, particularly to hang on to affordable health care, which he said has become a “major sticking point” in the talks. Given the national economic trends of a weak job market, various inflationary pressures, and rising health insurance premiums, the issue is likely to remain among the most salient ones between employees and the college for the future.

“This last negotiation we had was really the first time I can recall a major restructuring of the payment schedules for the employees,” he said. “In years past, [health care] had gone up a little bit, but nothing really that major.”

He was straightforward in his suspicion of the college’s intentions. “[Their goal is to have] the unionized workers pay the exact same amount as the other faculty and staff,” he said. “It hasn’t been said at a meeting, but eventually, this is the direction it’s headed. They’ll chip away at it until they can get it equalized.”

An anonymous worker in the Marketplace said that the school’s generous benefits are a prime reason why so many workers keep Oxy as their employer. Yet the worker also called the rising cost of health care a “great concern,” saying that equalizing health care payments between union and non-union employees would mean “a big chunk out of our take-home pay. If someone is earning forty to fifty thousand dollars a year at this school, and they’re paying a certain amount, and we’re earning twenty to twenty-five thousand [while paying the same], definitely there is going to be some scrimping going on in some households here,” said the worker.

Perez thinks hanging on to benefits would have taken a “big fight” in the past, as it will in the future, but said he is unsure
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One employee who wished to remain anonymous has been a temp for more than three years. They were allegedly told by management that full-time jobs would be offered sometime before September.

A worker in Cleaning Services, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity and in a whisper throughout the interview with the *Weekly*, described having to go through a three month wait before receiving a raise. The employee asked management for the raise after seeing that another worker who had worked at Oxy for less time was getting paid more.

“It is very convenient for the college to employ temp workers at low wages and offer no benefits or vacation time,” said the worker, who frequently looked towards the doors to see if anyone was listening throughout the interview.

When asked whether the college has a policy, written or otherwise, of giving priority to temp workers employed for at least a year when permanent positions open up, Tranquada replied, “The College values and seeks to reward consistent, superior job performance. Accordingly, it is more important to the administration to reward those individuals who perform admirably with regular positions than it is to reward mere longevity without reference to on-the-job performance.”

Needless to say, the more SLAC has forged ties with Oxy’s work force, the more they have gained a sense of the most common concerns shared by the people who feed and clean up after them. The next step is communicating these concerns to a growing periphery of students. The relationship between students, union and non-union workers, and administration will develop more as negotiations begin for the new contract sometime in the following year.

**The Afterlife of Occidental's Garbage:
A Call to Students to be More Responsible**

by William Meade

Just when I think I am done I hear a "creak

actions affect their jobs that I write this article. The employees of Occidental do their work with grace and are always courteous to students and I have a great amount of respect for them. It has been a trying experience for me at times. I am not trying to blame anyone nor am I trying to make anyone feel guilty. I also know there are many students at Occidental that are responsible in their actions and I realize that the students that do put glass or fluids down the trash shoots do not intend to cause anyone harm. I am asking that we all make a campus wide effort to show the employees at Occidental respect through making responsible actions. For why they are parents they are not your parents.

#6108

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET

NFPA Rating: Health = / 2, Flammability = 0, Reactivity = 0

HMIS Rating: Health = / 2, Flammability = 0, Reactivity = 0

SECTION I -- IDENTITY AND MANUFACTURER'S INFORMATION (0558C)

Manufacturer's Name: HILLYARD INDUSTRIES **Product Name:** BRITE-BAK

Address: 302 North Fourth Street **Date Prepared:** January 5, 2001

St. Joseph, MO 64501 **Prepared by:** Regulatory Affairs Department

Emergency Telephone No.:

SECTION IV -- FIRE AND EXPLOSION HAZARD DATA

Flash point: None to 200°F (T.C.C.) **Flammable Limits:** LEL = N.A. UEL = N.A.

Extinguishing Media: Foam, dry chemical, carbon dioxide, water spray.

Special Fire Fighting Procedures: Hot phosphoric acid is corrosive. Self-contained breathing apparatus and protective clothing should be worn in fighting fires involving chemicals.

Unusual Fire and Explosion Hazards: May generate hydrogen gas in contact with some metals.

SECTION V -- PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Stability: Stable **Conditions to Avoid:** None known to manufacturer.

Incompatibility (Materials to Avoid): Corrodes some metals and alloys, cyanides and strong alkalis (ammonia) or bleach.

Hazardous Decomposition Products or Byproducts: Hydrogen gas from contact with some metals.

Hazardous Polymerization: Will not Occur **Conditions to Avoid:** N.A.

SECTION VI -- HEALTH HAZARD DATA

Routes of entry: Inhalation? by mist Skin? yes Ingestion? yes

HEALTH HAZARDS (1. Acute and 2. Chronic)

1. Concentrate is not a skin irritant per Federal Hazardous Substance Act; concentrate caused eye burns per the Federal

Hazardous Substance Act. Concentrate is harmful if swallowed. Inhalation may cause nose and throat irritation. Was not

acutely toxic to the 10 test animals following a 1 hour exposure at an actual concentration of 56.41g/L. This is the maximum

concentration that could be generated by this test. Acute toxicity (oral) to laboratory rats is greater than 5 g/kg. 2. None

known by Hillyard Industries.

Chemical listed as Carcinogen or Potential Carcinogen:

National Toxicology Program = No I.A.R.C. Monographs = No OSHA = No

This product has no carcinogens listed by IARC, NTP, NIOSH, or ACGIH as of this date, greater than or equal to 0.1%.

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SECTION VI -- HEALTH HAZARD DATA continued

Signs and Symptoms of Exposure: Contact with concentrate: burns of eyes, and on mouth and lips after ingestion, with sour taste of acid, severe gastrointestinal irritation. Prolonged breathing of high concentrations of butyl cellosolve vapor may result in respiratory

and eye irritation, narcosis, hematuria, and damage to liver and kidneys. 2. None known to Hillyard Industries.

Medical Conditions Generally Aggravated by Exposure: None known to manufacturer.

Emergency and First Aid Procedures: In case of contact, immediately flush eyes or skin with plenty of water for at least 15 minutes while removing contaminated clothing and shoes. Get medical attention immediately. Wash clothing before reuse and thoroughly

clean contaminated shoes before reuse. If swallowed, do not induce vomiting; immediately give large amounts of water and CALL A PHYSICIAN, hospital emergency room, or poison control center. Inhalation - Remove victim to fresh air; if respiratory tract remains irritated call a physician.

SECTION VII -- PRECAUTIONS FOR SAFE HANDLING AND USE

Steps To Be Taken In Case Material Is Released Or Spilled: If spilled, contain spilled material and remove with inert absorbent.

Dispose of contaminated absorbent, container, and unused contents in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. Use solvent-resistant eyewear with splash guards, solvent-impermeable rubber gloves, rubber boots, and rubber apron or suit to prevent skin contact. Avoid contamination of storm drains, sewers, or other unauthorized treatment drainage systems, and natural waterways.

Waste Disposal Method: Disposal is regulated under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (40 CFR 261.22) as a corrosive waste. Regulated quantities should be neutralized by a permitted facility in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. Do not dispose of in storm drains or streams.

Precautions To Be Taken In Handling And Storing: Product residue may remain on or in empty containers. All precautions for handling the product must be used in handling the empty container or residue. Container disposal: Triple rinse (or equivalent) then offer clean, dry container for recycling or reconditioning. Waste from normal use may be sewer to a public-owned treatment works in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

Other Precautions: USE ONLY WITH ADEQUATE VENTILATION. Avoid breathing vapors or spray mist. Open windows and doors, use exhaust fans or other means to insure fresh air entry during application and drying. Refer to OSHA STANDARD 29 CFR 1910.94 for technical guidelines on keeping air contamination below acceptable exposure limits. Keep container closed when not in use. Avoid contact with eyes, skin, and clothing. Wash thoroughly after handling. Do not take internally. Contains Butyl Cellosolve which may cause blood damage based on animal data.

SECTION VIII -- CONTROL MEASURES

Respiratory Protection (Specify Type):

Not usually necessary. If spraying in a fine fog mist use NIOSH approved respirator (TC-21C-279, TC-23C-736, or TC-23C-745).

Ventilation: At least 3 air exchanges per hour suggested in good public restrooms.

Local Exhaust = Recommended Mechanical (General) = Recommended Special = N.A. Other = N.A.

Protective Gloves: Impervious gloves (rubber). **Eye Protection:** Solvent-resistant eyewear with splash shields.

Other Protective Clothing or Equipment: Not usually necessary. Where there is a danger of contact with concentrated cleaner use

solvent-resistant rubber gloves, rubber boots and rubber apron or suit to prevent skin contact.

Work / Hygienic Practices: Wash thoroughly after handling. Upon contact remove contaminated clothing; wash before reuse.

SECTION IX -- TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

Applicable regulations: DOT = Yes; IMCO = Yes; IATA = Yes

Proper shipping name (Quart and Gallon Boxes) for U.S. Highway: Consumer Commodity ORM-D

Proper shipping name (55 Gallon Drums) for U.S. Highway: Compound, cleaning liquid, (Phosphoric acid), 8, NA 1760, PG III

UN No.: UN1760 Limited Qty.: not applicable **Hazard Class:** 8

Label required: not required on quart and gallon boxes by highway; 55 gallon drum = Corrosive Label

DOT Exception: not applicable. **EPA Hazardous waste/number code:** not listed

Hazardous waste characteristics: Ignitability = not applicable; Corrosivity = yes;

Reactivity = not applicable

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NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES, EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS

FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, OR OF ANY NATURE ARE MADE WITH RESPECT TO THE PRODUCT(S) OR

INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET.

The information and recommendations

contained in this Material Safety Data Sheet are supplied pursuant to 29 CFR 1910.1200 of the Occupational Safety and

Health Standards Hazard Communication Rule. All information contained herein is presented in good faith and is believed to

be appropriate and accurate. THE BUYER OR USER ASSUMES ALL RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE, MISUSE

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