## Wages and benefits—too low, too little

Texas A&M University employs more than 1,500 clerical and secretarial workers. Although their titles, duties, responsibilities and salaries differ, their complaints are the same: the salaries are not enough, some of the employee ben-efits are not desirable and merit raises are too few

"It gets pretty depressing when I think 'Hey, I've got a college degree and I'm working for \$3.02 an hour," said Ann, a secretary who holds a Bachelor of Science degree. Her nusband attends the University.

"All employees must start their obs at the first step of pay for their title regardless of past experience," said Wayne Terrell, wage and salary classification manager for Texas

Nancy, a senior secretary, explained her resentment for this policy. "I came here five years ago from the Detroit, Mich., area where I made \$3.90 an hour. I had profitsharing and my insurance was fully paid. I had to start here at \$2.47 an hour despite my past working exeri-

Now, five years later, I am being paid \$3.95 an hour. I pay \$33.10 a

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month for group medical insurance while the University pays \$15 toward the insurance," she said.

Like so many others, Nancy's husband is employed by the University, so she continues to stay. But she is quick to add that she likes her ob. The department head she works for is appreciative of her work and the people around her are nice, she said. "If it weren't for them, I would have quit long ago," Nancy

Texas A&M determines wage rates based on the local job market in College Station and Bryan. "We're not concerned with what other universities pay their em-

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ployees, but we want to match the salaries the local businesses pay," Terrel said. "There have been complaints that we pay less, and others

say they can't keep up with us."

Several local businesses refused Texas Employment Commission said that the salaries of the University and local businesses average

about the same.
"It wouldn't be fair just to compare our salaries with anyone outside the University without looking at the total package of benefits we offer," Terrell said.

Benefits offered by the University include vacations for first-year employees, maternity leave and sick leave. Medical hospitalization and long-term disability insurance are offered at low group rates to employees. The University requires that all employees be covered by life insurance. The state of Texas will pay up to \$15 toward all insurance except the mandatory life insurance.

Also included in the benefit pack-

age is mandatory participation in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, a state agency for retirement benefits. Five dollars is put into the fund each year for the employee's membership in the retirement system. Also, 6.65 percent of his gross monthly salary is deducted for re-

"The state puts 7.5 percent into each person's retirement," said Tom Goss, employee benefits represen-tative for Texas A&M. "If an employee decided to leave the University and not go to another educa-tional agency, he can get the money back with 5 percent interest."

Several secretaries are not happy with the retirement fund system.

"I resent being forced to participate in a retirement fund that pays less than a savings and loan," Nancy said. "I especially resent being

forced to participate in a teachers' program when I'm not a teacher."

The retirement fund pays 5 percent a year. Savings and loan companies pay up to 5.25 percent a year on ordinary savings deposits.

Another senior secretary, Paula, attends evening classes at the University, and her husband also is a

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"Though I'll be getting the money back when I leave, we really could use it now," she said. "Most students need all they can get."

The University provides for a standard wage pay raise at the first

Several local businesses refused to release salary and benefit information, but a spokesman for the Texas Employment Commission

Texas Employment Commission

The Children's provides to a standard wage pay raise at the first of the year, Terrell said. It is rewarded regardless of the quality of work done. Merit raises on the basis

"I resent being forced to participate in a retirement fund that pays less than a savings and loan. I especially resent being forced to participate in a teachers' program when I'm not a teacher." — Nancy, secretary at Texas A&M Uni-

of work quality are up to the departent if it has the money, he added. "I had one merit raise and that

was taken out of the deartmental

operating fund," Nancy said. "The University does not put any money in just for merit raises.

One department head explained that purchases for the department deplete funds that might go to secretarial and clerical raises. He said that "Money seems to be tight

One secretary said that it seemed that supervisors were closing their eye to good work because they

can't afford to raise the pay."
"I've worked in two different departments, and in neither one has there been praise for good work," Nancy said, "Many of the people here at the University are here only because they have to be. Either work for these wages or don't work

Ann's comments were the same. "When you get to mumbling and grumbling about it, you've got to think about it, there's not much you can do in a college town

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