UNION Collective Bargaining Fact Sheet (for Union Students only)

A collective bargaining session is about to begin. You have been elected by your coworkers to represent the Hospital Employees Union, which includes 625 employees at Getwell Hospital. Your union members are certified nursing assistants (“C.N.A.”s), laboratory technicians (“lab techs”), radiology technicians (“radiology techs”), pharmacy technicians (“pharmacy techs”), food service, and housekeeping workers. Your issues are: 1) Wages; 2) Medical Benefits; 3) Health and Safety; 4) Child Care. Your goal is to negotiate the best wage and benefit package you can for a one-year contract with the Getwell Hospital for your coworkers.

Issue 1: WAGES

This is an extremely important bargaining issue to your union membership. The average wage of your members is $20.00/hour, and many employees are having a hard time paying all their family bills every month. Getwell Hospital’s past contracts with your union have not kept up with inflation in consumer prices or with other hospitals in your region. You want the new union contract to make up for this. You have read the NMC’s Annual Financial Report (they own your hospital), which says that the stockholders received higher dividends on their shares last year. You feel that the company should be sharing its profits with the workers whose labor creates the profits! While your goal (confidentially) is to get at least a 5% increase in wages from management, your first demand is a 10 percent wage increase, or $2.00/hour for every worker.

Getwell Hospital has provided health care services at no charge for all employees and their dependents on-site at the Hospital, or any of NMC’s hospitals around the nation. However, Getwell management recently informed the union that the cost of providing these health care services is expected to increase 12-13% next year, or almost $500,000. (.125 x $533/month = $66 each month, and multiplied by 625 employees x 12 months/year = $495,000). Rumors have been circulating that NMC/Getwell wants to make the employees pay for this (alleged) increasing insurance cost by deducting this $66 each month from your paychecks. Your union members want to maintain their current 100% company-paid family medical insurance at the hospital.

Issue 2: BENEFITS

Accidental “sharps” injuries from syringes (needles), scalpels, test tubes, and blood-drawing devices are a serious hazard for all healthcare workers, from janitors (housekeeping) to direct caregivers, both during and after use. There are more than 25 blood-borne diseases that workers can contract from exposure to sharp objects that contain body fluids or blood, including HIV. Recently, a housekeeper was struck while closing the lid of a sharps disposal container that was full, and last year a nurse contracted HIV from a used needle that did not retract properly. To comply with Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) rules on exposure to blood-borne biohazards, the union wants management to set up a labor-management Sharps Safety Training Program to establish both accident prevention and product selection programs. The cost of employees planning and attending this training on a continual basis will be $10,000 a year.

Many of your union members have young children and feel strongly that the hospital should provide an on-site, not-for-profit child care center. The high cost and lack of available high-quality childcare make life extremely difficult. You estimate that the cost of an on-site facility to be less than $100,000 if the hospital renovates existing vacant space, and if the employees who enroll their children pay a fee to cover the teachers’ salaries and supplies.