



# The Advocate

## Student Success Revisited

Almost five years ago, in the April/May 2010 issue, *The Advocate* published an article I wrote about student success called "Steep Grade Ahead."<sup>1</sup> This article started a system-wide conversation about what the phrase "student success" should mean. Ultimately, Chancellor Richard Carpenter formed an ad hoc committee charged with looking critically at the concept. The committee participated in a thorough literature search and conducted a survey of Lone Star faculty and administration that garnered over 700 responses. The committee released its final report in April, 2011, in two

parts. The first part was intended to give a philosophical basis that we planned to make a touchstone for all future discussion of student success; it was entitled "What We Believe About Student Success." The second part listed specific recommendations for measuring and assessing student success. (Some of the results of this work were foreshadowed in a second article in *The Advocate* entitled "What Student Success is Not" in the January/March, 2011 issue.)

A lot of water has gone under the bridge at Lone Star College in these five years. This is a good time to renew a conversation about where we were then, where we are now, and how well we have stayed true to the principles outlined in 2011. To start that conversation, we are reprinting "What We Believe About Student Success" along with this introductory article.

Two current events make revisiting especially relevant:

- 1) The implementation of partial performance-based funding for Texas community colleges, and
- 2) President Barack Obama's call for free access to a community college education for all Americans.

The original article I wrote, and the subsequent work of the committee, were both inspired by two major concerns that were putting the dis-

### Inside this issue:

Student Success Revisited	1 - 3
What We Believe about Student Success	3 - 5
Sea Change	5
Another Look	6
Things We Cannot Measure	6 - 9
Linda Bridges' Vision	9 - 10
Tales From The Unionside	10 - 11
Letter to the Editor	11 - 12
AFT Savings	12
Stay in the Loop	13
AFT Benefits	14
Application	15
AFT Officers	16

## Spring Celebration

It's Friday,  
April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
from 4:00-7:00pm!

Venue to be  
Announced.

Come take a little Spring  
Break. Enjoy your union  
friends and relax. Bring your  
significant other.  
It is going to be *fun*!

**Stay tuned for  
location  
announcement!**



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cussion of student success in a narrow and inadequate light. The report of the committee went a long way towards broadening the view.

The first major concern we had in mind was that the Texas legislature was beginning seriously to discuss the idea that colleges should be partially funded based on the degree to which their students “succeed.” At the time, the state government was viewing success strictly in terms of graduation rates within 6 years (for universities) and within 3 years (for community colleges). This definition was problematic for community colleges for two obvious reasons. First, many of our students have no plans at all of receiving a degree from LSCS. Second, we are the primary educators of working-class and non-traditional students who do not and cannot attend college full-time. Many of our students are the first in their families to attempt college. Many of them recognize that college, for them, will be a multi-year commitment.

In their work, the committee concluded that our definition of success had to be student-centric. We need to ask our students what their goals are for their time with us and judge their success relative to their goals. This definition immediately begs the question, “What if the students don’t know what their goals are?” There has been movement towards this definition at both the state and college level; it is important for us to examine whether that movement is enough.

First, the state now considers other measures of student performance besides graduation. Also considered is completion of a field of study, completion of the core curriculum, transfer to a university with a given number of credit hours, and completion of developmental sequences in math and English. A complex process of benchmarking based on these measures now dictates a portion of our state funding. Although these measures take greater consideration of what student goals might be, it is easy to think of many examples of student goals that these measures completely miss. Most fundamentally, at the state level, we are still missing the point that, if we want to know whether students are achieving the goals for which they enrolled in our colleges, it

might be nice if we actually asked them what those goals are.

If we move beyond the borders of Texas, however, and listen to the national discussion of community colleges, we are still hearing far too much about our “abysmal graduation rates.” At the national level, the discussion has a long way to go.

At the college level, we are trying harder to document student goals through our advising offices. Our EDUC 1300 course is making a conscious effort to help students explore their potential and set ambitious goals with realistic timelines. These are important steps and our advising staff and EDUC 1300 faculty deserve special commendation for their work. Where do we go from here to make sure the momentum carries through to the students’ entire college career?

The second major concern that I, and subsequently the committee, wanted to address is how we as a college understand success as students move from semester to semester. At the time, and for many years previously, success was being understood in terms of course grades. Collaterally, it appeared that student success was getting conflated with instructor effectiveness. “Professor X, how many of your students pass your class with a C or better? What does that say about you?” Grade distributions are a poor measure of either. They fail to take into consideration a host of variables and misdirect energy towards raising an arbitrary number rather than supporting students in their learning. We were soundly criticized for our emphasis on course grades by some really big names in the community college world. John Roueche, Robert McCabe, Byron McClenney, and Kay McClenney served on a blue ribbon committee examining our developmental program as part of our 2001 SACS accreditation. They urged us to change our focus to documented mastery of course outcomes, completion of subsequent courses, completion of programs, and measuring whether students who need extra support catch up over time compared to those who don’t. They also urged us to disaggregate our data by campus, program, student age, gender, and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>



Changing our internal conceptualization of how success is measured focuses our attention on identifying students who need help and providing support to them. That we are internalizing this lesson is evidenced by the expansion of student support services and success centers over the last several years. We have focused our attention on high-risk student groups such as veterans and minority men. What more can we do to address the issues that stand in the way of success for some of our students, such as child support and housing insecurity? To what degree are we still overly obsessed with looking at our grade distributions?

The work of the committee emphasized that we help our students truly succeed, not by making things easy for them, but by setting high standards that challenge them to achieve excellence and then by providing support to help them get there. Let us take this chance, five years out, to acknowledge how far we've come as a school and a state towards that goal and discuss where we need to go from here.

John Burghdoff  
Professor of Math, LSC-CyFair



<sup>1</sup> Back issues of *The Advocate* are available at [www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org). Select the News drop down menu and select Archives of *The Advocate*.

<sup>2</sup> Roueche, John, McCabe, Robert, McClenney, Byron, McClenney, Kay, *Highlights of the SACS Consulting Team Report* (for the NHMCCD accreditation visit special project on Student Success in Developmental Education, Spring 2001.)

## What We Believe about Student Success

### Chancellor's Ad Hoc Committee on Student Success: Proposed Final Edition, April 11, 2011

**1. We believe**, in the context of a community college, student success means that students achieve their individual goals as participants in the college community.

**Commentary:** Students enroll in a community college for a vast array of reasons. For some, their goal is graduation with an associate's degree or certificate. However, if we operate on the assumption that graduation is the goal of all, or even most, of our students, we will mistakenly label as failures a large number of students who are completely satisfied that their experience with us has been a success. These students take classes at a community college to accumulate a few credits to transfer to another college or university, to improve specific skills for the workplace and/or to enhance their knowledge/skills for personal enrichment. All efforts to understand, measure and promote student success must respect and honor this array of goals. Furthermore, students do not necessarily commit themselves to one college for all their classes. Many swirl through several colleges gathering the credits they need from each. It must be considered that, although a student may not complete his or her goals at a given college, that college has still made a meaningful contribution to student success.

**2. We believe** the community college plays a vital role in assisting and guiding students in setting goals that are realistic and attainable and yet challenge the students to achieve their full potential.

**Commentary:** Many community college students begin with no clear goal in mind at all. Others come with goals that are unrealistic or, at the least, fail to acknowledge that a great deal of background work will be needed before the goals can be achieved. Still others, often first generation students, are unaware of the many possibilities open to



them and set goals that are lower than their full potential. For all of these students, clarifying realistic and attainable goals is itself the first milestone of success. The college community, through advising and counseling and the mentoring of faculty, plays an essential role in helping students to articulate these goals.

**3. We believe** successful community college students operate on time lines that do not match traditional expectations, and that understanding student success should include recognition of completion of specific short term steps on the path to long term goals.

**Commentary:** Most measures of success that are applied to higher education put a time line for success at 1.5 to 2 times the traditional expectations. For example, graduation rates for bachelors degrees are often measured within a 6-year time frame. Community college students, as distinct from students at four-year institutions, are more often balancing work, school and family obligations and these situations require them to move at a slower pace—which in fact actually improves their probability of achieving their ultimate goals. In addition, some community college students begin with a profound need of remediation, so that more than one semester may be needed to pass a single class—and this initial time must be added to the arc of these students' journey towards graduation, transfer or other goals. Advisors and faculty play a key role in helping students set realistic short term goals that take these factors under consideration and that will help students stay on track towards achieving their long term goals.

**4. We believe** student success requires a healthy partnership between administrators, support services, faculty and students, each taking responsibility for their respective roles.

**Commentary:** A college that states that it is committed to student success is obligated to provide the highest quality of instruction possible (at both the college level and the developmental level) and robust support services. Highly qualified, innovative and dedicated

faculty have a profound impact on students' futures. Effective advising, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, financial aid, student activities and other support services each play an important part in positioning students to maximize their performance. Administrators provide the resources and environment for faculty and staff to perform their roles effectively. However, it must also be understood that the ultimate responsibility for learning resides with the learner. Students can only learn successfully if they actively respond and persistently engage in the requisite activities prescribed by faculty, staff and administration. They must develop effective study habits, implement strategies to meet course outcomes, utilize support services as needed, and update/revise goals along the path to completion – all within the framework of regular, timely contacts with the college advisor(s). The college plays an important role in helping students develop these behaviors. However, any attempt to understand, measure and promote student success should take into consideration that some students will choose not to engage.

**5. We believe** student success is maximized when students are challenged to achieve high standards of excellence.

**Commentary:** In helping students understand how to set and achieve goals, one of the assumptions that the college community needs to try to help students put aside is the notion that just getting by is good enough. Whether students plan to transfer to a four year school, to enter the workforce directly or to pursue other endeavors, the college must prepare them for a very competitive world in which the best prepared have the best chance of success. Therefore, our standards for students should be high. But, historically, efforts to measure student success have, in some places, had the unintended consequence of compromising these standards. For example, in situations where grade distributions or test scores have been used as the measure of success, faculty have sometimes felt pressure to lower expectations to inflate scores. The



college can avoid this effect by clearly and consistently articulating its support for high expectations and by choosing a broad array of measures that focus on all aspects of student success.

**6. We believe** student success is the core mission of the Lone Star College System. It is vital to the achievement of this mission to gather data to research our effectiveness and to learn from the data we find. As our students are diverse in their goals and experiences, an array of new measures will be required to address this diversity.

**Commentary:** The most commonly used measures of student success, grade distributions and graduation rights, are useful but do not capture all the aspects of student success. The “momentum points” proposed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, including pass rates in developmental and first college level Math and English classes, completion of 15 or 30 hours as well as graduation rates, go farther but focus student success on only two disciplines and still fail to capture the diversity of students’ goals. Additional data exists and new measures should be implemented including a careful documentation of students’ individual goals and their achievement thereof.



## Sea Change

At the December 4, 2014 Board of Trustees Meeting, AFT members in the audience witnessed an important shift in the course of the college. Three new trustees were sworn in, all three minorities. AFT endorsed Art Murillo and Alton Smith in their bid for election. We have established a good relationship with the third new member, Ken Lloyd. These three trustees will help guide the Board toward a more open, progressive, student committed, and employee friendly position than we have seen in the recent past. We were especially pleased to watch former State Representative Kevin Bailey, the first president of AFT Lone Star, swear in the new board members.

The Board of Trustees reorganizes every two years. At the beginning of the meeting, Trustee Bob Wolfe offered a committee recommendation to elect David Holsey as president, David Vogt as vice president, Lind Good as secretary, and Kyle Scott as assistant secretary. A motion was made to accept this recommendation, but it failed with only 3 positive votes. Trustee Ron Trowbridge offered an alternative list: Linda Good president, Kyle Scott vice president, Ron Trowbridge secretary, and Alton Smith assistant secretary. This motion passed in a vote of 5 to 3 with one abstention. AFT has endorsed three of the officers and has an excellent relationship with the fourth.

The mood in the audience was festive. Clearly a welcome change has arrived. There is much work to be done. The union's role will now shift from a defensive position fending off spurious attacks from the administration and former board chair to a more positive, proactive position assisting with positive change and development of Lone Star College.

Alan Hall





## Another Look

In the last edition of *The Advocate*, I wrote an article titled “LSCS’s Mission.” The focus was on an administrative decision to cap the salaries of senior employees, faculty, support staff, and professional staff. The article’s title pointed out an irony: the college’s mission is teaching students, but employees who have the closest connection to students had their salaries capped. After I wrote that article, I discovered another irony: at LSC-North Harris, three of the four teacher excellence award winners were among those who had their salaries capped. Imagine receiving notice that one has received recognition as an outstanding teacher, and in close order, notice that one’s salary is being capped.



The question here is, what does the college value? Upper administrators’ salaries have no cap, a fact that would suggest that the primary value is on administrative activities. Further evidence also supports that conclusion. For instance, we often hear that senior faculty are too expensive. We must remember that those faculty have worked for the college thirty plus years to arrive at their salaries, while many administrators walk in the first day earning several thousand dollars more than those faculty members.

Forty-six employees who have direct contact with students have had their salaries capped. Unless the college reconsiders what it most values, all faculty and staff potentially face this same experience. As the administration moves into planning the next budget cycle, it has the opportunity to remove the caps in recognition of the value senior employees bring to LSCS.

Alan Hall

## Things We Cannot Measure: Going Beyond the Data

*The following is the text of a speech made by Paula Khalaf, Faculty Senate President LSC-UP, at a Faculty Senate Presidents’ Board Presentation, Dec. 4, 2014.*

The best thing about being a faculty member is working with students, for it is both challenging and rewarding. Much of what happens during a semester cannot be measured. The faculty senate presidents asked our colleagues to share their favorite stories that go beyond the data. While time does not allow for us to present all of the responses, this is a sampling of stories and notes that faculty shared. Student’s names are not used and in some instances, the faculty member also wished to remain anonymous. (There is at least one story from each campus.)

Professor Seth Batiste shared this note from one of his developmental English students:

“Mr. Batiste I enjoyed your message you gave at the seminar this evening. And the message I got from it is simply stated in three words. “DON’T GIVE UP”! The most powerful inspirational phrase another black male figure has given me. You come from where I come from and your message is very clear that if we stay focused on our goals we can just about achieve anything we put our minds to. Please remain a positive role model for brothers like myself trying to make it out of the madness (the hood) because without your knowledge so many of us (black men) will remain lost. Thank you for believing in me Professor Batiste and giving me the respect and love only a true man would give to their siblings. Much respect in return to you sir and I can only end this message in salute to a great educator.”

One student chose to write an essay about his English professor for his college success course. The student recalls attending the first class, anxious that it would be too difficult, and the relief he felt when his professor introduced herself the first day and let students call her by her first name. Later in the semester, this student found out that his mother had



breast cancer. He had lost his father years earlier and was devastated. He was able to talk to this professor who shared with him that she was a breast cancer survivor. He got back on track, and completed the semester well prepared for the next level of English. He concludes his essay with, "Now I have the proper tools to construct prose when I have an assignment to write or a speech to structure to effectively get my message across to my audience...all thanks to an inspiring teacher. God willing, I will become one of those teachers someday."

A student told her story of taking algebra seven times. She dropped out of high school because she "could not do math." She was profoundly grateful for a teacher at LSC-Kingwood who worked with her and helped her understand math. She goes forward ready to graduate because of this teacher.

One LSC-Tomball Faculty member writes, "This excellent student had taken me for two Honors classes. He was a pastor at his church, as well as a counselor at a prison. His and his wife's salaries didn't cover upcoming bills and tuition, so my husband and I created a scholarship to go towards his tuition. I don't think he ever knew about it. He graduated a few semesters later with an Associate's in Arts and with Honors."

One student writes to Professor Rachel Smith: "Thank you very much for not only being a wonderful and effective professor, but also for making a class like Calculus 2 fun and interesting. I am deeply obliged that an awesome teacher like you will be recommending me as a suitable and deserving candidate for pharmacy school. Thanks a lot for taking me one step closer to my dream of becoming a pharmacist."

Margaret Jelinek Lewis, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, LSC-Tomball, shares happy moments, remembering the "...student who, many years later, showed up at my office door with her infant and said, 'I knew I could be a good Mom because of your class.' (PSYC 2314)" Also, there was "...the student who is Hispanic & Catholic and homosexual...[who] was thrown out of his parents'

house and then found out he was HIV positive. And then came to apologize for missing class. The first thing I did was gave him a hug. And then I told him how to get treatment. (PSYC 2306)"

This is why I love teaching.

"Dear Mrs. Womack,  
I would like to thank you for a wonderful semester. I even learned some life lessons from both you and the class. I cannot begin to express with words the relief I felt when I was in your class. To tell you the truth a lot of the teachers I have had in the past treated me differently because of my eyes. However, you have been the closest teacher to perfection."

Another student writes, "I truly owe Mrs. Womack for her kindness and understanding. I often see her with students answering questions and showing she cares. Although she is no longer my instructor, I feel free to go to her with any study or writing problem I have. Just last spring, I was unmotivated and worn out from all the hours I was giving to school. She helped me see my goal once again and move forward. Because of her instruction, I have gone to college level classes with confidence. I have a 3.6 GPA and at the end of this semester will be ready to begin the Physical Therapy program at the Montgomery campus. If I had the ability to see my future two years ago, *unbelievable* would have been my response. She is a star in my eyes."

A class of all minority and ESOL students each created a Power Point slide and surprised their instructor with it their last day of class. These students were in the lowest level of developmental reading. A few things they said included:

"Taking this class and having Dr. Harris as my instructor will forever fuel my desire for learning."

"You have truly taught me skills and given me knowledge I will use for the rest of my life. Thank you for an amazing LIFE GIFT!"

"You are the best teacher I have ever had in my life. You inspired me to keep moving forward no



matter what...You actually care for your students, and for that I will always have a great deal of respect for you!"

A student guest, Jessica Villegas shares the following story, titled "My First Semester in College":

"On October 7, 2013 my fiancé Larry who works for an armor truck company was the victim of an attempted robbery. He was seriously injured due to multiple gunshot wounds and rushed to the hospital where he was in critical conditions and had to have multiple surgeries. The injuries and multiple surgeries had weakened his body so the doctors kept him sedated to let his body recover but the doctors informed us that he may not be the same physically. This was a shock to all of us but his family took it very hard, I did not know what to do so I swallow my emotions and made myself their shoulder to lean on.

Eventually I went back to school but trying to deal with my fiancé in the hospital, my daughter to look after and school work left me exhausted, stressed and depressed. I decided to talk to my English teachers from my learning community class Paula Khalaf and Gail Marxhausen and let them know what I was going thru. They were caring, supportive, and they became my shoulder to lean on. I had decided to drop out of college but my professors pushed me to stay in school and referred me to Julie Wilson a compassionate counselor at Lone Star College-CyFair who I could talk to about what I was going thru. She help me understand that my problems were not problems but challenges that I must overcome, and she showed me how to overcome these challenges.

My fiancé went through months of painful therapy to be able to walk, run and use his arm but he has recovered and is awaiting his final surgery next year. As for me, I was able to finish the fall, spring, and summer semesters with A's and B's; furthermore, I'm currently taking honors classes at University Park. Words cannot express how thankful I am for these three people. It is because of their compassion, guidance, and support that I am able to stand here before you excited of what the future

holds for me and my family."

[*Khalaf concludes.*] We hope that sharing these stories enrich perceptions about the college experience. Higher education is and has been under fire—asked to justify its existence according to its monetary value which is measured by the number of graduates, the number of years it takes a student to graduate, employment rates, transfer rates, the earning potential for a particular degree versus the cost of the degree and on and on.

We should be accountable, and the best college faculty constantly evaluate what they do and reflect on outcomes to improve student success. We have been evaluating student performance forever—it is called exams and grades. However, as you have seen tonight, grades and A,B,C success rates do not tell the whole story. The stories we have shared demonstrate how education enriches lives, develops the communication skills necessary for people to participate in their communities, states, and nation. An educated society is necessary for a flourishing democracy.

I quote a first-time-in college student who last spring wrote about a professor that had changed her life. "For me, education was just a way to get a job...During these past weeks, my English professor's knowledge and way of teaching have changed the way I think about education. For example, we were given different stories to read about people who improved their lives through education. Therefore, she helped me understand that education in not monetary value, but education allows people to enjoy freedom, knowledge, and self-improvement. This professor has not only impacted my education, but my life."

We must demand accurate data and accurate interpretation of that data. Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute has a 99 page report on how the US really compares internationally to other like countries regarding education.<sup>1</sup> It is NOT the 20-second sound bite that most would prefer, but it is solid research, the kind of academic inquiry necessary for sound decision making. His analysis of data shows that the US does an excel-





lent job educating our population when compared to similar countries—and a better job of educating traditionally underachieving groups of students. YES, there are many gaps in achievement for those in poverty, so there is work to be done, but we must also demand social and economic reform and not allow the burden of economic policy failures to be dropped on the doorstep of our schools and at the feet of our teachers. We must advocate for the intrinsic value of education in our communities, for if we are held only to an economic standard we are doomed to remain under fire.

We are all responsible. We need you to join us and carry this message to our community, to politicians, and to our corporate partners. Lone Star College's open door is far more than a door to a job; it is a pathway to freedom, better lives, a flourishing democracy and the American Dream.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.epi.org/publication/us-student-performance-testing/>

Paula Khalaf, Professor of Developmental English, Faculty Senate President of LSC-UP

### Linda Bridges' Vision

"Because our kids are worth it."  
"Sitting on the sidelines is not an option!"

Linda Bridges, our Texas AFT President since 2005, died January 13, 2015 of natural causes. Linda served as president of Corpus Christi AFT for 24 years before taking up the mantle of leadership of Texas AFT. She was a tireless advocate for students, parents, teachers, and staff in our educational system. She cared for the marginalized on both sides of the U.S./Texas border with our neighbor Mexico. She leaves behind not only a great legacy of service, perseverance, and purpose, but a vision for Texas AFT members to carry forward.

The Texas House of Representatives paused and honored Linda the day after her death. Louis Malfaro, AFT Secretary-Treasurer, states that Linda did not care "...if you were a Democrat, or Republi-

can....[I]t mattered if you were willing to work with Linda and her organization on the things that she cared about and that she valued...school children and the public schools of Texas, and the men and women who wash the dishes in the cafeterias, drive the school buses, who come to the building every day and counsel, and nurse, and teach the 5.1 million kids in this state. And if you were willing to work with Linda on that, then she was willing to work with you."

In November 2014, Linda convened the Texas AFT Legislative Kickoff designed to educate and inform AFT leaders about Texas AFT legislative goals and roles AFT members can play. The three main legislative goals for 2015 are

- Funding Schools Equitably and Adequately
- Improving Education through Community Schools
- Gaining and Sustaining Affordable, High-Quality Health Benefits

At the Kickoff, Linda spoke about how disconnected politicians are from the public regarding education. She also spoke about our unresponsive political system. Issues that public schools and our AFT Union continue to face are 1) "continued underfunding that deprives students of the resources they need," 2) "more misuse of state test scores to label our schools, students and teachers as failures," 3) "wholesale transfers of students and funding from neighborhood public schools to private operators," and 4) "deprofessionalization of teaching and disrespect for those who serve in our public schools and institutions of higher education." Other areas that may be vulnerable in the next legislative session are our "pensions, health care, pay, benefits and basic employee rights."

Linda's inclusive vision is revealed by her use of the words "together," "we," and "our." Her vision to reclaim the promise of public education in the state of Texas is for parents and education employees to "...work together with community allies to reclaim the promise of quality public education. Together we fix the broken testing system. We restore school funding and make sure educational opportunity does not depend on a child's ZIP Code. We say no to



vouchers and other privatization schemes. We redefine accountability so that we measure what matters—preparation of our students for success in life, not just for snapshot state tests. We reclaim the respect we deserve for our work and the support we need to meet the needs of every individual child. We can only take public education on a road to a better future if we stick together. Join us as we reclaim the promise of public education in our state. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option!”

Linda Bridges’ obituary states, “Linda is survived by the 5.1 million Texas school children on whose behalf she worked tirelessly. She is also survived by her union sister of many years Kay Lee, and four-legged children Dixie, Shell and Sara.”

Let us carry forward her legacy and her vision for the future of public education.

Earl Brewer, Maintenance Specialist 3,  
Fairbanks Center

<sup>1</sup>Corpus Christi Memorial Service for Texas AFT President Linda Bridges

<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/texasaft>; 09:40 minute mark.

Texas House of Representatives

<http://www.texasaft.org/memorial-observances-honor-linda-bridges-late-texas-aft-president/>

<sup>2</sup>Full Texas Legislative Agenda 2015.

<http://www.texasaft.org/legislative-agenda/>

<sup>3</sup>Legislative Agenda 2015 brochure

<sup>4</sup><http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?pid=173859670#sthash.ffW9TM60.dpuf>

### Links for additional information about Linda and the Texas AFT:

Corpus Christi Memorial Service for Texas AFT President Linda Bridges

<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/texasaft>;

Obituary

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?pid=173859670#sthash.ffW9TM60.dpuf>

Texas AFT Web Site

<http://www.texasaft.org/>

## Tales from The Unionside

*Editor’s Note: Starting with this issue of The Advocate, political science professor Bob Locander will be writing a regular column on people, politics, and the AFT at Lone Star College.*

David Feldman saved my life in 1986. Let me explain. I was reminded of my rescue when I saw Feldman in January on local TV news announcing his decision to step down as Houston City Attorney. Feldman came into my life twenty-nine years ago through his aggressive defense of my First Amendment rights and union activity.

The villains in my tale from long ago were North Harris County College Chancellor Joe Airola and Board of Trustees Member Brad York. Both Airola and York were against unions in general and in particular, a faculty union at North Harris College.

During the early 1980’s, I knew that union leaders Kevin Bailey and Alan Hall had college administration targets on their backs, but I did not expect to have any shots fired at me. I was wrong! My “crime” was an article I had written for my civic club newsletter about the Aldine I.S.D. election in 1986. This short article brought a two-page, single-spaced, job-threatening letter signed by Chancellor Airola.

As the President of the McKamy Meadows Community Improvement Association, I had written a piece entitled “Consider Voting for Williams and Bradford in the Aldine Election.” The purpose of my article was to nudge a few McKamy residents into voting in our school board election. The usual turnout at our Shotwell School voting place consisted of the poll workers, my wife, and me.

While I did little good in persuading my neighbors to vote, the McKamy newsletter did end up in the hands of Dr. Airola and the College Board members. After looking over the newsletter, the Chancellor charged me with a violation of College Policy 343BP.05 in his threatening letter handed to me at school. I read Airola’s letter and did not think too much of it until I received a telephone call at home.



The phone call came from my “Deep Throat” within the college administration. He warned me to get legal representation within a day or two, or I would be facing termination in a matter of weeks. My “Mark Felt” was a college trustee who did not agree with the planned ambush of a faculty member for exercising his First Amendment rights. In talking with “Felt,” I found out that Trustee York, and not Airola, was the triggerman behind the attempted ambush.

With Trustee York on a mission to take me out, I called Attorney David Feldman for legal help. Feldman was a JFK liberal in 1986 and a strong supporter of First Amendment rights in the private and public sectors. He had a soft spot for teachers, as he knew that in Texas educators’ rights were more mythical than real despite what state law and the Texas Constitution said.

Having Feldman as my attorney turned out to be the right call for me. In response to the two-page threatening Airola-bomb dropped on me, Feldman fired off a four-page missive attack calling into question the College’s charges against me: “blatant attempt to embarrass the College,” “poor judgment,” and the issue of my “fitness as an instructor.”

The Administration’s reaction to Feldman’s defense of my First Amendment rights was a quiet retreat. Chancellor Airola claimed that the whole situation was a case of misunderstanding and that no one at the College was threatening “Dr. Locander’s job.” Feldman’s demand to Airola that all traces of this episode be removed from my personnel file was met.

Weeks after the matter was settled, I did receive a telephone call from Trustee York blaming me for stirring things up by involving a lawyer. When York suggested that we meet in person to talk things out, I politely declined and called Feldman. It was Feldman who called York with a message to “stop harassing my client.” I was unaware of Feldman’s call until after it was made. I probably would not have approved such a call to a trustee, but I was glad that David Feldman was there to save my professional career so many years ago.

Bob Locander,  
Professor of Political Science, LSC-North Harris



Hello,

I read with great interest the article ‘Adjunct Workload Revisited Again’ by John Burghduff. Being an adjunct myself, anything regarding adjuncts is of some importance to myself. While I agree with Professor Burghduff in that Lone Star absolutely needs to comply with federal laws and that, hopefully, the workload would be revised in favor of the adjuncts, I can report, for a fact, that the workload has *not* been revised. Because I taught three courses in the Fall, I am only allowed to teach two courses in the Spring, lowering my pay from, roughly, \$1,500 a month for the three months I am paid to \$1,000 a month. I am one of the many that people that attempt to support myself through being an adjunct and my question to both the board and all the full time professors is, could you support yourself on \$1,000 a month?

This brings me to my other point. At the end of his article, Professor Burghduff states “The AFT knows that it was not the goal of either the current or previous LSCS administrations to hurt adjunct faculty. Fortunately, we believe they do not have to.” To Professor Burghduff, and whoever else reads this letter, you would be wrong. If the LSCS did not intend to hurt the adjunct faculty, upon which upwards of 60% of their faculty is, they would not pay them so poorly or hire so many. I am well aware that the decisions are financially based and that it is far easier to hire lots of poorly paid adjuncts so Lone Star



can claim to service 95,000 students but the LSCS administration should not take the easy way out. Again, the question is, could *they* live on \$1,000 a month? I don't think so. Could the administration go for upwards of two months at a time without a pay-check? I doubt it.

To those reading this letter and saying "You're not supposed to be able to live on adjunct pay." I know, I'm quite well acquainted with that inability, are you? I work three part time jobs because of the severely outdated idea that adjuncts are only those who are retired or have another means of support and only adjunct because they like to. Does the LSCS administration truly believe that the majority of adjuncts are retired or have another means of support? Do they truly think that over half of the faculty is part time out of choice? If so, perhaps they should have a survey taken of the adjuncts to see what their reasons are for being an adjunct. I believe the answers would be enlightening.

As an adjunct, I know exactly where I fit in at Lone Star. I am the hired help, nothing more. I fill a need period. And the same would be said at all the other community colleges and four year colleges. Adjuncts are there to be used and they should not expect anything more. If they do not like adjunct pay, they can get a job doing something else, elsewhere. That attitude is very sad, for in it is the supposition that because someone enjoys what they do, it's okay to put them below the poverty level in terms of pay. I sincerely doubt that if the administration was in the same situation, that they would still hold the same idea.

The saddest part of all of this is that, monetarily speaking, it wouldn't take much to improve the pay of adjuncts. Even a small increase of \$500 a pay period would do much towards making a living as an adjunct possible. This August, the part time staff at Lone Star received a 4% raise, which, I'm certain, they definitely deserved. Adjuncts were not included in that raise. Why not? I'm part time but not part time enough? It's just sad.

I will also say that all of the people I personally work with are wonderfully giving people that I truly

enjoy working with and this is not directed at them. Like me, they have zero control over the budget and who gets paid what.

In the end, Professor Burghduff and the AFT, with all due respect, LSCS administration does not *care* about the adjuncts beyond what they can bring to Lone Star. Do they intend to hurt the adjuncts? Absolutely.

*Editor's note: The writer requested anonymity.*

**If you are interested in Membership, benefits or would like to discuss a work-related issue, our AFT Faculty and Staff Vice-Presidents are here to assist! Please don't hesitate to contact them! See the back page of this publication for contact information.**



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# Reclaiming our College

A union of professionals

The promise of a community college is to draw people who live and work in our communities, educate and empower them to serve, and send them out to cultivate a just and vibrant society. In order to reclaim this promise, AFT Lone Star College is committed to:

- Restoring dignity and respect to the workplace
- Ensuring safe working and learning environments
- Promoting a culture of collaboration between faculty, staff and administration
- Putting the community back in the college to make sure the promise is kept

**Become a member of  
AFT and join us in  
our effort to reclaim  
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# AFT-Lone Star College

AFT Local Union # 4518

## GOALS

- To promote academic excellence
- To protect academic freedom in higher education
- To preserve and protect the integrity and unique identity of each of the institutions of higher education in Texas
- To protect the dignity and rights of faculty against discrimination
- To ensure that faculty have an effective voice on all matters pertaining to their welfare
- To secure for all members the rights to which they are entitled
- To raise the standards of the profession by establishing professional working conditions
- To encourage democratization of higher education
- To promote the welfare of the citizens of Texas by providing better educational opportunities for all
- To initiate and support state legislation which will benefit the students and faculty of Texas
- To promote and assist the formation and growth of Texas United Faculty chapters throughout Texas
- To maintain and promote the aims of the American Federation of Teachers and other affiliated labor bodies

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Join us today!

## BENEFITS

- \$8,000,000 Occupational Liability Insurance
  - provides security while teaching
  - protection against litigation
  - malpractice protection
- \$25,000 Accidental Death Insurance
- Legal Assistance
  - Free consultation and representation on grievances and job related problems
  - Services of leading labor attorneys
  - Legal Defense Fund protection
- Political Power
  - Texas AFT lobbyists in Austin
  - AFT lobbyists in Washington
  - Representation at the Coordinating Board
  - Support for local electoral work
- Affiliations
  - Affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO
  - Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and Texas AFT
- Staff Services
  - Professional representatives to assist and advise in processing grievances
  - AFT research facilities
  - Leadership Training
- Savings and discounts on goods and services with AFT PLUS Benefits
- Free \$10,000 term life insurance policy for first year of membership

### Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$37.04
Full-time Professional Staff	\$28.60
Full-time Support Staff	\$25.48
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$13.28

### Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on page 20 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at:

**[www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)**



[www.texasaft.org](http://www.texasaft.org)

American Federation of Teachers  
Texas AFT  
AFL-CIO



[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)



# American Federation of Teachers -Lone Star College Membership Application

AFT-Lone Star College is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Texas AFT and accepts membership from all non-supervisory employees of the Lonestar College System. Indicate below whether you are a new member or a current member wishing to update your contact information. Membership with AFT-Lone Star College provides each member with an \$8 million Professional Occupational Liability coverage policy, legal defense coverage and access to representation for work-related issues. In addition, AFT-Lone Star College members are entitled to special savings and discounts through our AFT PLUS benefits program. **If you have questions about joining, please call AFT- Lone Star College @ 281-889-1009.** You may also visit our website: [www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)

- 1) Fill out the application below and choose your method of payment
- 2) Remit this application to AFT-Lone Star College President, Alan Hall

By US mail: AFT - Lone Star College P.O. Box 788 Spring, Texas 77383-0788 **OR** Interoffice mail: Alan Hall @ A-217, North Harris



## 2014-2015 Monthly Membership Dues rates:

*Based on your position with the Lonestar College System, please select your appropriate dues rate.*

- ☐ Full-time Faculty \$37.04/mo. or \$444.48/yr.  
☐ Full-time Professional Staff \$28.60/mo. or \$343.20/yr.  
☐ Full-time Support Staff \$25.48/mo. or \$305.76/yr.  
☐ Adjunct Faculty \$13.28/mo. or \$159.36/yr.  
☐ Part-time Staff \$13.28/mo. or \$159.36/yr.



### IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Payroll deduction allows members to pay union dues in monthly installments. If you prefer to write a check to pay for your union dues, be advised that AFT requires the full yearly amount payable in 2 six-month installments. Exceptions to the rule apply for Part-time Staff and Adjunct Faculty only.

First Name:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Middle Initial:	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	Last Name:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
Home Address:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>				
City:	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	State:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>	Zip code:	<input style="width: 30%;" type="text"/>
Home Phone:	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	Email Address:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
Employee ID #:	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	Campus:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
Position:	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	Room #:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>	Referred by:	<input style="width: 30%;" type="text"/>
I am paid:		<input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-monthly		Paid over: <input type="checkbox"/> 9 months <input type="checkbox"/> 9.5 months <input type="checkbox"/> 12 months	
Are you a current or new member? <input type="checkbox"/> Current member <small>(Updating information and/or payment method)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> New Member					
Choose method of payment: <input type="checkbox"/> Payroll Deduction <small>(Complete the union dues agreement below)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> Cash/Check <small>(Two 6 month payments payable to AFT-LSC)</small>					

## Union Dues Deduction Agreement

I hereby authorize Lone Star College System to deduct each pay period an amount equal to the dues in the amounts fixed in accordance with the Bylaws of AFT including any increase in dues in future years and pay same to said Union in accordance with the terms of the agreement between Lone Star College System and American Federation of Teachers. This agreement will remain in effect until Lone Star College System receives a written notice of cancellation from me, AFT or at the time of my termination, whichever occurs first. This authorization is subject to sufficient wages being available to comply with all other required deductions and existing federal and state laws.

Signature: (Print this form and sign here)

Date

[Click here to print form](#)

*For AFT-Lone Star College office use only. Do not write in this box.*

Position verified: YES NO (Initials) \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dues Class: FTF AF FTPS FTSS PTS C \_\_\_\_\_



P.O. Box 788 Spring, Texas 77383-0788

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### Call for Articles

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your ideas. Send your articles to **Pat Gray**, Editor via e-mail: [patsy.gray@lonestar.edu](mailto:patsy.gray@lonestar.edu), or submit to any of the following officers.

Alan Hall, President	North Harris	ACAD 217-G	281-618-5544
David Davis	North Harris	ACAD 264-G	281-618-5543
Stephen King	North Harris	ACAD 162-H	281-618-5530
Allen Vogt	North Harris	ACAD 264-C	281-618-5583
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood	FTC 100-G	281-312-1656
Laura Codner	Kingwood	CLA 110—D	281-312- 414
Catherine Olson	Tomball	S 153 - H	281-357-3776
Richard Becker	Tomball	E 271-D	281-401-1835
Janet Moore	Tomball	E 210 -E	281-401-1871
Van Piercy	Tomball	S 153-J	281-401-1814
Martina Kusi-Mensah	Montgomery	G 121-J	936-273-7276
Louise Casey-Clukey	Montgomery	B 100-G	936-273-7394
John Burghduff	Cy-Fair	HSC 250-G	281-290-3915
Kathy Hughes	Cy-Fair	FBC 218A	832-782-5063
Earl Brewer	Fairbanks	S - 13	832-782-5029

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to give this message were invited to join and pro-

vided some advice on how to proceed with their situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available.

The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values

of the AFT—that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice in their professional lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, AFT is there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

—Alan Hall