

NORTH HARRIS COUNTY COLLEGE UNITED FACULTY

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THE ADVOCATE

NHCC United Faculty
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Edited by Olin Joynton
Secretary, NHCC UF

President's Column

By Alan Hall

As part of North Harris County College United Faculty's support for increased state funding for higher education in general and NHCC in particular, I met with State Senator Gene Green on July 13 and State Representative Weldon Betts on July 20. I was pleased to find both legislators optimistic. Green noted recent increases in the collection of state sales tax and optimistic estimates for future collection by Comptroller Bob Bullock. Green feels that increased tax collection points to an improving Texas economy. One concern I have is the possibility of oil suffering a sharp drop. Betts feels that with the increased income from sales tax, we would be okay as long as oil doesn't drop below ten dollars a barrel.

I also visited with both legislators about Governor Clements' veto of insurance funds for community college employees which, over the biennium, cost two-year schools \$45 million; NHCC alone lost \$1 million. I emphasized the importance of restoring funding for insurance in the next session as well as paying back through an emergency appropriation the \$45 million which had to be made up out of local districts' funds. Betts said that Clements had "no reason to do that to community colleges" and agreed to work toward restoration of insurance funding, a position Green also endorsed. Both legislators also supported returning the \$45 million lost to the veto, but Green pointed out that the Governor must still sign a bill from the Appropriations Committee restoring the loss and that he might simply red line the appropriation again.

Dr. Airola had asked me to ask both legislators their opinion on how community colleges could best represent their needs in the next legislative session. In the last session, the 49 community college districts joined a coalition of four-year schools in an effort to salvage funding for higher education in general. When the dust settled, four-year schools experienced a 6% increase

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"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

while two-year schools received a 2% increase, and then they suffered the loss of the insurance funding. Dr. Airola wondered if the two-year schools would be better off forming a coalition of their own. Green feels that it is important to work with four-year schools on common issues but believes that a separate community college coalition, having a distinct political identity, is important, a point on which Betts agreed. I was pleased to hear their opinions, for they also reinforce the structure of NHCC United Faculty. We work with the four-year schools within Texas United Faculty, our higher education affiliate, yet we are able to focus on the needs of two-year schools. Both Green and Betts are aware of the importance of the role played by higher education in Texas and NHCC in particular. Both agreed to take a look at our funding in that next legislature. Green emphasized a need for consistency in higher education funding: "This approach of cutting back because of funding problems and then giving colleges more money in the next biennium because of the cutbacks last time, but then cutting back in the next session because you got a lot last time isn't working." He pointed out the difficulty of planning and building programs with such haphazard funding. Green seems committed to putting more dollars into higher education and maintaining that consistency that he feels is so important. Betts is also strongly supportive. He says that if the increase in sales tax continues as Bullock projects, "We can get you the money." Betts also emphasized the importance of contact with the legislators through concise letters and phone calls as well as personal visits either in the home district or in Austin. These people are listening; we need to continue to talk to them.

Membership for Division Heads

By Olin Joynton

On June 30 the Executive Committee, composed of the officers of NHCC United Faculty, met to consider the question of whether division heads should be eligible for membership. This question became pertinent when three of our members applied for division head openings for the coming academic year; all of them hoped that they could retain their membership should they receive an appointment. One of the three, Marilyn Rhinehart, was named on July 14 to chair the Social Sciences division.

Our constitution states that administrators may not belong but leaves it to the Executive Committee to define what is an administrator. Although the College defines division heads as administrators, and although problems could result in a dispute between a faculty union member and a division head union member, we decided to approve membership for division heads. Our reasoning was based on the following points:

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1. As their position has been redefined by the College, more than half of their duties will consist of teaching.
2. Division heads do not make hiring and firing decisions.
3. At other community colleges division heads are members of Texas United Faculty and do not report any problems.
4. Our members who applied for division head positions were told by Dr. Phillips and Dr. McMillian that their continuing membership would pose no difficulty from their point of view.
5. In case of a dispute between faculty union member and a division chair union member, we would do what we always do: try to insure that due process is observed, look for ways to achieve an equitable compromise, and serve as an advocate based on our perception of the individual merits of the cases.

There Must Be Something in the Water

Our membership has nearly doubled over the past few months, and many who have not yet come in have shown a lot of interest in doing so. More and more, we are seen as the organization which stands tough to represent faculty yet does its utmost to work with the administration, Board, and Legislature for the good of the College. We want to grow stronger so that we can do these jobs better. And that means that we want you to join if you haven't already. You can do so by sending a \$17 check for your first month's dues to Treasurer Allen Vogt, Suite A-264, South Campus.

And If You're Not Ready to Join But Still Want to Help . . .

NHCC United Faculty maintains a political action fund to support the campaigns of elected officials who stand for, or who can be persuaded to stand for, excellence in public higher education at North Harris County College. We plan to use these funds, as well as our own volunteer efforts, this fall in the State Legislature races that affect our College District most. We welcome contributions from members and nonmembers alike, but we must remind you that federal tax credits are no longer available for political contributions. Send your check to Treasurer Allen Vogt, Suite A-264, South Campus.