

NORTH HARRIS COUNTY COLLEGE UNITED FACULTY

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THE ADVOCATE

DECEMBER, 1991

Edited by Steve Davis

STRAIGHT TALK ON SUMMER SALARIES AND MERIT PAY

This editorial arises from a sense of frustration and indignation, a kind of sad conviction that NHMCCD's high standard for excellence is about to be jeopardized by misguided, unnecessary changes initiated mainly for the appearance of change. This institution has functioned for almost two decades, and, for the most part, it has functioned quite well. Its reputation for providing quality education for traditional and non-traditional students is outstanding. One major reason for this is that past boards and administrations have demonstrated that they appreciated the faculty's hard work and were willing to reward it. They have done this by paying comparatively good wages and by allowing faculty to earn a livable salary by working during the summer sessions at a pro rata portion of its full-time pay. The result has been to attract and retain an unusual number of excellent instructors who teach one or both of the two summer sessions. It is the belief of this writer that there is nothing NHMCCD does that goes further to enhance its reputation for quality than insuring that large numbers of full-time faculty teach throughout the summer. Many of our summer students come here specifically because they can expect to receive instruction from full-time faculty that is equal to or better than that of their four-year colleges and universities. Unfortunately, much of what we have all worked so hard to achieve is now at risk, unnecessarily so.

We have a new administration and it wants change. The first area to feel these winds of change is administrative costs. In a period of shrinking funds and declining resources, these particular costs are headed skyward. Our new chancellor's salary is three times that of the average faculty member. In addition, we have a whole new layer of administrators, complete with staffs, new cars, and lavish travel funds, that even conservative estimates indicate will cost the District

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

another million dollars per year. Never mind that every department's budget looks as though it was audited by a samurai or that our LRC has zero funds in its equipment budget. I suppose if I were an administrator with the proper "vision" for our school, none of this would seem so inappropriate. But I'm not, and it does.

To be fair, we should allow for the possibility that some of these new costs are necessary to modernize the administration and set a proper course for the future. Moreover, I honestly believe that most faculty members do not begrudge administrators their salaries, but only so long as they do not begrudge us ours. *But aye, Matey; there be the rub!* Our new administration has indicated that it believes we are paid too much for teaching in the summer. Contending that we do not appear to work as hard in the summer as in the regular semester, the administration has said that it is up to us to prove that we deserve to be paid as we are in the summer. This is a rather revealing position since anyone who has ever taught in summer school knows full well that the work load is fully comparable to that of a regular semester. But perhaps we, as faculty, are just not viewing the problem from the proper perspective. If our summer salaries were cut back to adjunct levels, this would save about \$450,000 over the entire summer, or enough to offset close to half of the increased cost of the new layer of administrators and their cars!

Next the mavens of management want to saddle us with a merit pay scheme. The task force committee established to do this was told that the present "lock-step" (sic) system, based upon education/training and experience must go; it discourages excellence and promotes mediocrity. WELL, EXCUSE ME! One must suppose that our past reputation for excellence was purely accidental. Granted, the present salary schedule needs revision, but there is no need to throw out the proverbial baby with the bath water. Doubling the number of steps, building in opportunities to earn additional monies, and creating a system for differentiated staffing would certainly be steps in the right direction.

Merit pay schemes are appealing on paper, but a review of recent articles concerning this issue indicates that they serve mainly as management tools to control employees and to meet the well-meaning but misguided demands of boards and legislatures for accountability. For these purposes, such a pay system may seem to work; however, as a means of improving faculty performance, it fails. What merit pay will do is reduce faculty morale, congeniality, and loyalty to NHMCCD. Further it will force the faculty and staff to waste their time creating a huge paper trail of meaningless activities to justify their existence. In short, we will end up documenting the trivial and extolling the banal. Of course, we can all play that game, but it will surely reduce the time we have to devote to our real raison d'être--instruction. The bottom line is that the excellent reputation that this institution enjoys is based squarely upon the quality of its instruction. With a merit pay structure, it is not only the faculty that will lose; our students will also lose. Perhaps the administration should take an honest look at the motivations behind these changes and then ask itself

if they will truly enhance the real mission of NHMCCD.

Phil Crow
Instructor of History
North Harris College

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN--A STAR RISES ON BUSINESS AS USUAL

At the October 24th Board meeting, the members of the Board witnessed the retirement of the logo which had served the college since 1973. They also viewed an unveiling, complete with a good deal of fanfare, of the District's new logo, a star. Now, the old "N" had served us well, and, perhaps, could have continued to do so. After all, our District name still begins with an "N". However, it was ceremoniously retired with a commemorative plaque to be placed in the District Board Room. That night really belonged to the new logo, and Board members were provided caps and tee-shirts with the new "point o' light" appropriately emblazoned upon them. All of this activity appeared to have been generated through Dr. Joyce Boatwright's office. I was pleased to see that, at least, the District did not turn to an outside consultant, as it has so frequently, and sometimes disastrously, done in the past.

A few days later, word came to me that my impression had been incorrect. The District had, indeed, hired a consultant to develop the new logo. First, I heard a figure of \$ 50,000, then a reduction to "no more than \$ 20,000." Aware that the District has a number of artists in the academic programs as well as in media--at least one with a commercial art background--who could perhaps have designed an acceptable logo, I was concerned that the District had, once again, ignored in-house talent in favor of an outside consultant.

I visited with Dr. Boatwright on this issue and discovered that her staff discussed at length whether or not to turn to a consultant. She assured me that the design of a logo requires "very refined expertise" which her staff felt it did not possess. After receiving proposals from several agencies, the District employed Stan and Lou, Inc., which has Compaq as a client. Certainly, the District is spending a lot of money in a new advertising campaign following the District's name change. The funds spent include new signs for the various colleges and District Office and advertising space on three strategically placed billboards, all of which will have the new logo. If we separate out the cost of the design of the star, its cost is only \$ 3,000, agreeably not a huge sum. The price included the development of "a style manual so that the logo would be used by all college personnel in a consistent manner." The issue here is not the money, although at a time when there appears to be an interest in cutting summer pay for faculty, any expenditure deserves watching.

The issues here are three. First, it was not immediately apparent that a consultant had been retained. Under a revamped system the Board agenda books no longer include a list of checks issued by the District. This new approach has helped to streamline meetings, but has made it difficult for observers to track expenditures. I checked with other

people to see if I had missed a discussion by the Board about hiring a consultant and could find no one with any such recollection. With the absence of a check list to verify expenditures, I would never have realized what happened if it had not come to me from a different source. Easy access to expenditures by the public and interested observers is an issue the Board should give another look. Second, I am not sure that a new logo could not have been designed in-house. In addition to previously mentioned staff, we have a talented Vice-Chancellor for Public Information and her staff. It would have been interesting to see what one of those people could have designed. A third and final issue is the whole idea of hiring consultants. The District's previous administration loved to hire them. Those people could not make a move without a trusty consultant guiding the way. It got to be a joke among employees. Today we have a new administration singing the praises of our talented staff. When it comes time to use them, it's business as usual.

Alan Hall

ANOTHER LETTER TO THE EDITOR

For some curious reason, last month's Advocate stirred an unusual amount of reader response. Complimentary calls and letters poured in from all corners of the District. The fearless editor of this publication even received a heartfelt invitation to come and sing at Tomball College. I haven't decided whether to accept. If I can rent an armored car for a reasonable price and get the AFT executive committee to ride along, I just might make an appearance. Perhaps the audience would appreciate a Woodstock-style rendition of "The Fish Cheer" or our World Beat/reggae arrangement of "Solidarity Forever."

Not all of the communications received were so favorable, however. One outraged instructor sent the following message:

To: Alan Hall

From: Paul Beran

Date: 11/18/91

Regarding: November 1991 The Advocate

I wish to publicly proclaim my oneness with my enlightened and esteemed colleagues at Tomball College. The article that raised my ire was the one by Pat Gray. How dare she freely speak of sons marrying mothers, and the two having children! Greek myth, indeed! Freud, an academic in the truest sense of the word, dealt with these issues, but he had the good sense and social grace to do it behind closed doors, not in a public forum. Any impressionable adolescent wandering aimlessly in the halls might open an instructor's box and suffer a moral lapse the likes of which even a firm foundation in developmental education cannot erase from his or her mind.

Therefore, in union (and I use that term to show oneness and not make

a proletarian proclamation) with those thinkers and singers at Tomball College who had the forthrightness not to let "political correctness" rear its ugly head and affect their common sense of decency and reality, I too lock my box to any further outrages that The Advocate might inflict upon the intellect that I have worked so hard to insulate from "enemies of freedom" and "internal change".

Paul Beran
Developmental Studies
North Harris College

HISTORY SYMPOSIUM GREAT SUCCESS

On November 23, the History Department of North Harris College held its 13th annual symposium. This year's topic, "Americans at War: The U.S. and World War II," was an enormously appealing one that nearly filled the Performing Arts Theater. Four outstanding speakers appeared. Dr. Ronald Marcello of North Texas told the harrowing story of Texas POWs who labored on a Burma to Thailand railroad for their Japanese captors. Dr. D'Ann Campbell of the University of Indiana spoke movingly of the contributions of women in the military and on the home front to the struggle against the Axis powers. Dr. Stephen Ambrose of the University of New Orleans--one of the foremost scholars of recent American history--gave an engaging account of Eisenhower's leadership in the Normandy invasion. Finally, General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. spoke forthrightly of the racism he battled during an illustrious Army and Air Force career. He overcame the shunning imposed by bigoted classmates to graduate from West Point in 1936. Davis told the audience of the contribution made by the all-black unit he commanded--the celebrated Tuskegee Airmen--in the fight against the Nazis. I don't know of a more inspiring speaker ever brought to our college than this proud and dignified man.

The history symposium is one of the most important things our institution does in the area of professional development and community outreach. Year after year, the organizers put together a superb program that attracts students, college faculty, public school teachers, and citizens from around our service area. Those of us at The Advocate commend Division Head Marilyn Rhinehart and her colleagues in the History Department at North Harris College who labor so hard on this project that brings such honor to NHMCCD.

Steve Davis

HOLIDAY WISHES

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.

Micah 4: 3-4 (RSV)

HOW ABOUT JOINING AFT?

All faculty and staff can enjoy the benefits of association with other employees committed to making NHMCCD an excellent place to work and teach--and the benefits of strong legal and professional liability protection should you ever need them. Monthly dues rates are \$19.35 for fulltime faculty, \$12.20 for fulltime staff and adjunct faculty, and \$9.10 for part-time staff. Discuss membership with Alan Hall (443-5544, 353-8634), Greg Mitchell (359-1698, 592-1660), or any other of the stalwarts (Cher Brock, Steve Davis, Robert Emerson, Bob Locander, Mel McFadden, Allen Vogt) on the union executive committee.

How To Write A Committee Report In Ten Minutes or Less

Charles Norman
Killeen Federation of Teachers

First, write your committee's conclusion and recommendations. You will need these instructions and a typewriter.

Choose a number at random from 0 to 999. Match the digits in the number to the following chart of educational terms:

0 Integrated	0 flexible	0 curriculum
1 Individualized	1 reciprocal	1 scheduling
2 Computer-assisted	2 instructional	2 framework
3 Sequenced	3 transitional	3 program
4 Optional	4 incremental	4 strategy
5 Multi-tracked	5 mastery	5 methodology
6 Focused	6 behavioral	6 technique
7 Balanced	7 functional	7 objectives
8 Need-based	8 supplementary	8 reinforcement
9 Performance-based	9 maintenance	9 resources

For instance, "935" gives us "Performance-based transitional methodology." This will be your committee's basic recommendation.

Now write a paragraph justifying this statement. Begin with "Due to the need for" and pick another random number. Continue in this way until you have three or four sentences.

Here is an example:

"Due to the need for a balanced behavioral program in the schools, the (fill in title) committee recommends that a multi-tracked incremental strategy be implemented in a computer-assisted transitional curriculum. Sequenced supplementary resources should also be utilized in an optional mastery framework in order to maximize the individualized maintenance scheduling in our integrated functional objectives."

Type up the statement you have generated and have everyone on the committee sign it. Submit it in triplicate with an attached article or two chosen at random from some scholarly education journal.

You will soon receive a note of appreciation for your valuable contributions