

# NORTH HARRIS COUNTY COLLEGE UNITED FACULTY

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THE ADVOCATE

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Edited by Steve Davis

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## MORE ON THE STATE OF THE DISTRICT

In last month's Advocate, I responded to the Chancellor's "State of the District" address, and since its publication I have received highly favorable comments from almost every corner of the District. Clearly, the union struck a highly responsive chord among employees with our concerns over showboating through administrative proliferation, fancy titles, and expensive compensation packages. For those of you who have joined AFT, we are grateful. If you are not a member, I hope that you will consider joining now. The more members we have, the more we can accomplish.

When we compare the increase of administration and its tandem costs to the current trends in the corporate world, we should be troubled. Perhaps even more troubling is a comparison to trends in higher education in Texas. The following is an article from the January-March 1992 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report, p. 5:

### HIGHER EDUCATION PREPARES FOR CUTS

Public higher education officials should "recognize realistically that they may face the most serious crisis in higher education budgeting in the past 30 years" and "prepare in-house contingency plans for no growth and institutional retrenchment," according to a resolution proposed by Coordinating Board Vice Chair Charles Sprague and adopted by the Board in January.

The resolution says colleges and universities should prepare for budget cuts as high as 10% from current levels and encourages them to "remove remaining perquisites, accessories, and trappings of

*"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"*

office which could be questionable to the public."

In a March 29, 1992 letter to Ms. Nancy S. Atlas, Chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Lt. Governor Bob Bullock wrote,

...there is no doubt in my mind that the time has come to dramatically change the way institutions of higher learning are organized, financed, and run. Thirty years of no-questions asked growth and prosperity are over. Like corporations and state government, universities must streamline management, trim expenses, and consolidate programs. They must reevaluate their missions and establish priorities...

I'm concerned that if we cut back on state aid, faculty salaries will decline and many high-caliber teachers will go elsewhere for financial reasons.

Obviously, state and national trends are to trim administration.

Dr. Pickelman has estimated that the net increase of nine new administrative positions can be covered with \$500,000. That figure may account for salaries, but does not take into account benefits, office space, and staff. I don't see how the cost could be less than 1.5 million, discounting any perks of which we are unaware. Perks seem to be part of the showboating trend I discussed in the last Advocate. For instance, at its March meeting, the Board approved for Dr. Pickelman the purchase of a 1992 Suburban (cost: \$23,224.42) which he negotiated as part of his compensation package. He defended this acquisition on the grounds that it is what he has now as his personal vehicle, and he will be able to use it to carry college personnel and supplies. With Austin thundering about cutting administrative fat and perks, we could question the wisdom of what is happening in the District.

If we examine Dr. Pickelman's new administrative chart with students at the top, faculty and staff next, and top administrators near the bottom, we might expect funds to be distributed in a manner reflecting the recognized priorities on this new chart--instruction. However, the high salaries and perks are not going to the top of this chart; they are going to the bottom. To earn these salaries and perks, employees must distance themselves from the front lines of instruction.

All this money put into new administrative positions has little direct impact on our primary mission--instruction. Where could the money be spent to have a more direct impact on students? The college's operations could be streamlined with a decent mainframe computer that works as it is supposed to. Faculty need personal computers in their offices that tie to the mainframe. Many secretaries are using "dinosaurs." Little has been done for computer-assisted instruction. One need only glance at the recent Title III Grant Request from North Harris College to see that our computer needs are enormous.

Our support staff need a healthy raise. Most secretaries are on 10.5 month contracts with a salary schedule beginning at \$13,541. Some staff members cannot afford to insure their children on the college's health plan. Believe me, money in this area would be well spent. Support staff come in contact with far more students than the upper echelons of administration. Grounds and maintenance crews keep the

campuses clean and help create a comfortable learning environment. Secretaries field hundreds of questions from students and the public, as well as handle faculty requests for typing and so forth. Without support staff, the faculty could not do their job well.

More money should be spent on part-time faculty. If memory serves, they have received only four raises in the history of the District. Adjunct faculty with a Master's degree start at \$1,275 per course. When they begin their eighth semester with the District, they move to \$1,400. University of Houston Downtown and San Jacinto College start their adjunct faculty at \$1,500 the first semester.

North Harris College is crowded for space. The students at all three colleges would benefit from a student center. We should have had childcare facilities a long time ago.

Instead of making these previous concerns priorities, Dr. Pickelman is putting a lot of money into glitz and glitter. Navigating by the stars, with the party in full swing, the showboat seems to be headed for dangerous shoals.

Alan Hall

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to AFT member Velma Smith and the Black Student Alliance for their efforts in bringing Pulitzer winning poet Gwendolyn Brooks to NHMCCD. It was a rare opportunity for the District, one we greatly appreciate. We would also like to congratulate all those faculty and staff who received service awards and excellence awards at the banquet on April 3. Special recognition goes to North Harris College AFT members Carol Crowder and Pat Gray as winners of the Teaching Excellence Award. We are proud of the achievements of all of these individuals.

### AM I GLAD I SAW GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Did you see her?

She stood there with the self assurance of a saint.  
and she spoke like a seer.

Was I out of place being there, a management teacher;  
or were you out of place NOT being there, a history teacher?

I'm glad I was there.  
I'm sorry you were not.

I didn't sit listening in awe. I sat enthralled.  
For ninety minutes I felt the waves of life, fierce and gentle.

I've seen wonderful things in my life.  
The flight of the last of the wild condors.  
George C. Scott on a New York stage as Willy Loman.  
New York City from the top of the Empire State Building.  
Richard Leakey teaching.



A bald eagle soaring against a backdrop of a thousand geese.

Gwendolyn Brooks reading her poetry.

If you couldn't be there, I understand.  
If you didn't go there, I don't.

Our college, your college, sponsored Brooks' appearance in Houston. But the newspapers didn't know it. Why not?

Hundreds of High Schoolers came. But only a few faculty. Mostly from what I could see, people from English, Developmental Studies, and...oops...a management (?!?!?) instructor and his wife. One top administrator. No Board members.

Oh well. She's only a poet. Only the successor to Carl Sandburg's Poet Laureate mantle. Only a Pulitzer Prize winner. Only one of a handful of worldwide influential late 20th century American poets. To beat all the odds, a black and a woman.

You didn't miss much.

Besides, even if you had read the papers, or looked on all the bulletin boards, you wouldn't have known about it. Not a lot of publicity. Couldn't have been that big a deal.

"We real cool"

Gary Clark  
Instructor of Management  
North Harris College

### THE BEN AND JERRY SOLUTION

With the major league season about three weeks old, one astonishing surprise is that the Astros--a team expected to play about as well as the 1899 Cleveland Spiders--have managed to compile a winning record. Before this unforeseen development, certainly the major focus of local baseball fans had been the dramatic rise in player salaries. According to one survey, the average major leaguer this season will make \$1,082,000. This number is inflated by the earnings of stars such as Ryne Sandberg (\$7.1 million), Roger Clemens (\$5.38 million), and Bobby Bonilla (\$5.8 million). The latter figure paid to the Mets outfielder would pay the salaries of 200 New York teachers for an entire year.

Clearly, something is rotten in the national pastime. No professional athlete, whatever his Hall of Fame credentials, is worth this kind of money. But what agitated fans overlook is the societal nature of this problem. How undeserving are these players compared to their employers, for instance? What about Astro owner John McMullen, whose irresponsible actions have nearly wrecked the Houston franchise? How many tens of millions in ill-gotten gains will this corporate buccaneer reap when he finally unloads the team? And take note of the phenomenon in other parts of the business world. Lee Iacocca, Frank Lorenzo, and other CEOs annually collect untold millions in salaries and stock

options while the firms they manage go right down the drain. How much justice is there in this?

Something must be done about the broader problem then--the obscene maldistribution of wealth and income in this society. Huey Long had it right in the Depression when he proposed that tax policy be used to limit individual holdings to \$3 million. The money confiscated from the parasitical elite could then be used to financially elevate common Americans who work for an honest living. We're never going to come close to attaining a measure of social justice in this country until we realize that the existence of multibillionaires like Ross Perot is somehow connected to the fact an army of Americans is sleeping on the streets. But don't expect the current crop of so-called political leaders to even address this issue. The White House crowd and their media lackeys will do all they can to guarantee that questions of who slept with whom and who smoked what will dominate the 1992 race rather than more vital questions of who wields wealth and power in this increasingly stratified society.

Into this awful breach steps a pair of Waterbury, Vermont entrepreneurs. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield founded Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream in 1978. They have achieved a notable level of success aiming at the upscale, Yuppified audience that favors competing products like Haagen-Dazs. Ben and Jerry bring a 1960s Counterculture sensibility to their enterprise. Certainly, anyone who has the chutzpah to name a flavor "Cherry Garcia" or "Brazilian Rain Forest Crunch" has earned my trade. Ben and Jerry also appear to hold the egalitarian notion that the sky is not the limit as far as corporate salaries are concerned. Indeed, they have a well-publicized 7-to-1 salary rule, whereby the highest paid member of the firm can earn no more than seven times the amount compensated the lowliest fulltime worker. Ben and Jerry spokeswoman, Mitch (sorry, I didn't get the last name), in an exclusive Advocate interview, explained that production workers at the company currently start at \$7 per hour. With benefits, their annual salary is in the area of \$17,400. Ben Cohen's salary as CEO and Board Chairman is still under \$100,000 and will not rise above that level until minimum hourly wages go up to \$8.25. Some simple arithmetic confirms that all this is well within the 7-to-1 limit.

Now what would such a policy do for employees at NHMCCD? Certainly our own bottom dogs--the lowest paid staff--would materially benefit. I would leave the Chancellor's salary at its current sum of \$125,000. Anyone who spends much time at the District Office deserves at least that much. Anyway, to put things in perspective, Dr. Pickelman makes only about 1/7th the salary (\$905,000) of Astro Casey Candaele--a utility infielder with a career average of .258. Applying the 7-to-1 ratio to the Chancellor's pay would dictate a minimum salary of \$17,857.14 for fulltime employees. A raise of nearly \$5,600 a year would result for staffers in pay category S-3, Step 1 (records clerk, groundskeeper, etc.). Beginning secretaries at pay grade S-5 currently make \$14,893 (\$7.16 per hour) on a 12-month basis. The Ben and Jerry solution would raise their salaries almost \$3000--assuming they would be at the lowest pay level.

Still unconsidered is the matter of the Chancellor's notorious Suburban. This vehicle has acquired such a mythical status, that I can almost imagine the damn thing driving itself around the District like

the Flying Dutchman's vessel. Now, the beauty of the Ben and Jerry system is that every employee should get at least 1/7th of any new compensation the chief receives. Since the District shelled out \$23,224.42 for the Suburban From Hell, the lowest pay grades should receive \$3317.77 for their own transportation. Of course, it's impossible to buy a decent new car today for less than \$10,000. The best solution then would be to provide every employee his or her appropriate share of car stamps. Faculty and staff could then put their stamps toward the purchase of a Hyundai, or a Yugo, or perhaps a station wagon with fake wood side panels. All of this would constitute a major step toward compensation equity in the District. A radical activist from the 1930s might term it "socialism in one community college."

While we're proposing rather sweeping reforms, I suggest it's time for another name change. "NHMCCD" is monstrously unwieldy, especially when pronounced in its full form. Since "Ben and Jerry's" has already been claimed, let's just call the place "John and Nellie's." This has the advantage over "NHMCCD" of brevity and euphony, and also pays tribute to my favorite Vice-Chancellor. Or we could just shorten it to "John's," which would express a certain power reality and still keep us from being confused with either St. John's or Johns Hopkins. Imagine the untold numbers of syllables this would spare receptionists and secretaries in answering the phone over the course of a single work day.

Could any of this actually happen or does it make too much sense to be feasible? I predict the Chancellor will actually implement these changes by the first of 1993--just after the Astros win the World Series.

Steve Davis

### JOIN THE 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 member of the union executive committee (Cher Brock, Steve Davis, Robert Emerson, Bob Locander, Mel McFadden, Allen Vogt).

Please consider writing for this newsletter. The Advocate staff is always looking for writers who can provide lively commentary on college affairs. Essays, book reviews, news items, prose poems--all kinds of submissions are welcome. We especially invite reader response--pro or con--to Alan Hall's series on the state of the District. The May and June issues will hopefully contain a sampling of communications on this topic. Please send all manuscripts or correspondence to the editor, 205B ADM, Kingwood College.