



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION



of

North Harris Montgomery
Community College District

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THE ADVOCATE

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Edited by Steve Davis

AMBUSH AVOIDANCE

I have grown concerned about an event which has begun to recur with some frequency lately--employees who are summoned to a supervisor's office without being told the nature of the meeting. The employee arrives alone at the appointed time and finds that the meeting's purpose is disciplinary in nature. On occasion, the supervisor has a witness of his own, and with no opportunity to gather information or prepare a response, the employee winds up with corrective action required, a letter in his file, or perhaps a threat to his job. Such situations are unfair and avoidable.

Anytime that you are asked to meet with a supervisor, you should know the subject of the meeting. If the subject is not offered, you should ask. Certainly, you do not need a representative to discuss curriculum, projects, or other routine matters. However, if you feel that the meeting will question your job performance and may result in disciplinary action, respectfully ask to have a representative present. The supervisor may suggest that the meeting is non-threatening, that bringing a representative will simply escalate the problem and prevent easy resolution. The more the supervisor insists that no representative is necessary, the more cautious you should be.

You may find yourself in a situation where you are told the topic of the meeting in advance and it sounds harmless. Once started, the meeting's focus turns to disciplinary issues. At that point, respectfully interrupt and ask for a postponement until you can secure a representative. If the supervisor refuses, emphasize that you continue under protest and will secure representation immediately following the meeting's conclusion.

Often, employee-supervisor conflicts are the result of differences in operating style or conflicts of personality, but the employee is made to appear in error, sometimes with information placed in a personnel file--or worse. Once such an event occurs, the harm is difficult to undo.

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

The Federation provides a representative to any member finding himself in this type of situation. We have leaders skilled in conflict resolution who have proven most helpful. The representatives have served as mediators between employee and supervisor, helping them to find solutions to conflicts and methods to communicate and work together effectively. Our leaders have also represented members involved in hostile confrontations. The advantage of having a representative present is that you have someone who can witness the proceedings to be sure any report of the events is accurate. The representative can help you clarify questions and issues, advise you, and can make sure you are treated fairly and without intimidation.

The union has an excellent track record in this arena, and I have been gratified by the appreciation demonstrated by those employees we have assisted. Repeatedly, they tell me how reassuring it was to have someone at their side in a conflict. Moreover, many supervisors have accepted or even solicited union representatives/mediators and have expressed satisfaction at the results. These supervisors include Bob Williams, Bill Richards, and Sandy Shugart. In an expression of his gratitude, Dr. Richards has noted his strong support of this practice. He believes that it saves time, puts people at ease, and solves problems most effectively.

Be wise. Precautionary action is the better part of valor.

Alan Hall

Announcements and Congratulations

The Aldine Center--The Federation congratulates The Aldine Center on the successful completion of its first year of operation. Since the center opened its doors, the student population has doubled, and programs have expanded. In the Spring of '94, the center will open its third site, bringing NHC back to a program at Aldine High School where the college first offered classes in 1974.

Recently, the center's first group of students took the TASP. These students began in remedial reading and writing classes at the center and had a 100% pass rate of the reading and writing sections of the test. The union also offers special congratulations to one student in this group, Stephanie Carter, who was one of five districtwide winners of a scholarship essay contest. Each college and the Aldine Center used a selection committee to evaluate the essays and determine the recipients. Stephanie's essay goes to the heart of the purpose of the Aldine Center, as this excerpt demonstrates:

It was in the late winter of 1993 that I first learned of a new college campus opening in the Acres Homes Community. As I recall, I had been praying fervently for an opportunity for my husband and me to attend college

Since that wonderful day, North Harris College has become my answer to prayer, my

road out of poverty, and my open door to a brighter future. . . .

My husband and I have both worked hard, yet struggled financially, during the one year we have been married. There seemed no way out, a hopeless situation with every door barred shut. . . .

I can see the future through the door plainly now. My hand is firmly on the knob as I turn it to walk through to a much better and brighter tomorrow. My prayers have been answered; I have found a road out of poverty and a wide door opened to a brighter and more promising future. This is what North Harris College has meant to me.

New Union Officer--The Federation is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Velma Smith to the position of Faculty Vice-President at NHC. Velma will serve out the remainder of Dr. Thelma Jones' term. Thelma, a longtime union member, retired this past summer.

New Position--Federation president Alan Hall was recently elected to the chair of Texas United Faculty, the statewide higher education component of the Texas Federation of Teachers, a position which will include serving on the TFT executive committee.

Tomball--The Federation has been experiencing steady growth in membership and welcomes all the employees who have recognized the value of union membership. We are especially pleased to have our first full-time member at Tomball College, Dr. Mary Ella Phelps. We welcome Mary and look forward to providing AFT services west of I-45!

JOIN THE AFT!

If you agree with the union's stances on educational and workplace issues, then it's time for you to join the Employee Federation. No other organization or publication at NHMCCD takes our kind of independent, critical approach to District affairs. If you want that effort to continue, then show your solidarity by becoming a member. All faculty and staff are eligible. Monthly dues rates are \$20.25 for full-time faculty, \$13.10 for full-time staff and adjunct faculty, and \$10.00 for part-time staff. Discuss membership with Alan Hall, District President (443-5544, 353-8634); Marilyn Kron, District Staff President; or any other member (Tony Foster, Bob Locander, Mel McFadden, Greg Mitchell, Patricia Plunk, Velma Smith, Allen Vogt, Steve Davis) of the Federation executive committee.