



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery
Community College District

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THE ADVOCATE

APRIL-MAY, 1994

The Budget

Progress, which had been so slow in coming to the college, has taken a number of leaps forward, especially in the technical areas. Voice mail, E-mail, computers in every faculty office have moved us from the dark ages into the twentieth century, fortunately just before the century ends. We now approach a time of year when it is important for the college and Board to remember that we have other needs as well. Again and again, we hear from them that our employees are our most valuable resource, an idea that should weigh heavily in their minds as they make decisions on salary and benefits. What should the priorities be?

First, we need to increase salaries for adjunct faculty. These people work hard for the District, but they are one of the most abused segments of the institution. Some colleges in the area pay their adjuncts more per course than NHMCCD--an inexcusable situation. If the college wants to be the best and recruit the best, then it must pay the best. Cramped office space, minimal contact with the divisions and their members, and, regrettably, often the feeling of being outsiders beset our adjunct faculty. The least the college can do is to pay them decently.

Next, we need to make significant improvement in support staff salaries. Last year, Dr. Pickelman acknowledged that some of our staff members qualified for welfare assistance, a situation he decried. Now is a time when the college can do something about it. The staff is crucial to the mission of the college. They should be compensated at a level that reflects their importance.

Finally, the full-time faculty must not be forgotten. The salary structure for faculty has been in limbo for three years now. Chancellor Emeritus Joe Airola ignored the Step 16 problem for several years before he retired, dumping the problem in Dr. Pickelman's lap. Several faculty committees grappled with the issue prior to Dr. Pickelman's arrival in February of 1991, including one chaired by Brenda Steuer. Her committee made recommendations to Dr. Pickelman in May, 1991. Dr. Pickelman stated that he did not want to act hastily and needed a year to study the proposals before making a recommendation.

However, another committee, chaired by Melanie Younger, was convened to study the salary question, and it made recommendations in May, 1992. About this time, Pat Pate

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

was moving out of his position, and Dr. Pickelman noted that he wanted to wait until his replacement was hired to get the new person's input regarding the proposals. By the time Bob Brown, now the Vice-Chancellor of Internal Affairs, was in place, the district needed a Vice-Chancellor of Human Resources, and Dr. Pickelman did not want to make significant changes to the salary structure without this person's input. Finally, Judy Conley has been hired in this position. One year is about to stretch into four.

The committees that made recommendations to Dr. Pickelman struggled mightily with issues of ranges and merit pay, in spite of the fact that a number of faculty prefer a step system with an increased number of steps. An NHC Faculty Senate Survey revealed 79% answered yes to the question, "Would you favor revising the current step system by extending the number of steps (years of experience)?" Sixty-one percent answered no to the question, "Would you favor a range salary system as an alternative to the current [16] step schedule?" In both cases, a clear majority approved the step system and rejected the range system, perhaps because they know the problems associated with a range system. Currently, this whole problem has been dumped in the lap of Judy Conley. What a nightmare she has inherited! I do not envy her. The message should be clear, however. It is past time to get the issue resolved.

I know the union's ideas on compensation are costly, but they are absolutely necessary if we are to continue to be the institution we claim to be. We have all heard the either/or fallacy--you either get new technology or more compensation. We have heard how tight the budget is. The union's position is that we agree totally with the administration and the Board--our people are our most important asset. Let's remember to act accordingly.

Alan Hall

Life After Teaching

Dear Future NHMCCD Retirees,

Alan Hall has asked me as a recent retiree to write about "Being an NHMCCD Retiree." I have eagerly accepted that invitation. In a nutshell, at his institution retirees are to a large extent "gone and forgotten." Let me explain:

Sad to say, there are only two things the retiree can expect from the college at this time. (1) Medical benefits. Assuredly, these are not to be taken lightly, and I feel relatively secure knowing that if I had an accident or serious illness, I would most likely not become bankrupt because of medical expenses. (2) Free tuition in CE and academic courses. As a local resident, I appreciate this. I've enrolled in several Continuing Ed courses and the CE staff knows how to register retirees. I can't always say the same when registering for academic courses. (And one retiree who had enrolled tuition-free for a course and had to drop it before classes began actually was sent a refund!)

However, there is so much more that the college could do to make the retiree feel that he/she is still an integral part of the college. And this could be done at minimal expense to the institution. In August, 1992, Charlene Johnson (who worked in payroll when the college opened, worked for many years at NHC, later worked at District, and retired in August, 1988) and I asked to meet with Dr. Shugart. He warmly received us and asked Geraldine Gallagher as NHC Director of College Relations to join in our conversation about retirees and the college. Although we were addressing particularly NHC and those who had worked there, suggestions were applicable to all colleges and retirees, no matter what their former position with NHMCCD.

Since medical benefits are of utmost importance to all retirees, it seems only logical that a retiree should sit on the Insurance Committee. This would cost the college nothing, yet it would allow what could be vital input from a population not currently represented on the Committee. A questionnaire could be sent to local retirees to determine who would be interested in serving in such a capacity and the Committee could elect the representative. Although Dr. Shugart was most enthusiastic about this suggestion, I am not aware today, a year and a half later, that it has been acted upon.

At least this year retirees' names are included in the District's Personnel Directory. Nonetheless, the information format is not in keeping with the rest of the directory. Social and academic titles are indiscriminately used (why use them at all since they are not used for current faculty and staff?), no telephone numbers are given, no mention is made of the college and division from which the person retired, and spouses names are not given. In the case of Charlene, for example, if I didn't personally know her husband's name, I'd have to search through literally a hundred plus "Johnsons" in a phone book to find one with her address. If District does not have this information, although I can't imagine why it shouldn't, then I suggest that to obtain the correct data a brief cover letter, a questionnaire, and return envelope be sent to all retirees.

But wouldn't it be nice if the college would then send a directory to each retiree (which it does not do now). Since District and each college has a public relations professional who in turn has secretarial support, this could be easily done.

Even though Ms. Johnson and I expressed to Dr. Shugart that we did not feel an NHMCCD Retirees Organization was necessary at this time, the lack of communication from the college does need to be addressed. Those of us who live in the college district receive some updates of college happenings from friends and local newspapers, but that information is received haphazardly. A copy of MAXIM is sent to retirees (at least I receive a copy), but it tells me nothing that I don't already know. Having spent more than two-thirds of my professional career at NHMCCD, I don't need a public relations instrument designed for the mass public as I'm already "sold on" the college. What about a periodic bulletin that keeps us abreast of college happenings? We don't need a slick color magazine with features (unless they relate specifically to retirees).

We're retired now--our "salaries" are lower. What about a discount at Fines Arts Theater performances and other ticketed events? The goodwill would mean even more to us than the discount itself since tickets are not expensive. Now we have the time to attend since there's not a stack of papers staring at us to be graded. And the above-mentioned bulletin would alert us to upcoming performances if we weren't lucky enough to read about them in the local print media.

Why aren't we invited to the Awards Banquet? Aren't we interested in those folks with whom we spent literally years? Of course we are, or at least some of us are! We'd each be quite willing to pay for our companion if we don't wish to come alone, but what a wonderful opportunity to mingle with our "academic family."

There are times when the college periodically needs additional employees. For example, students are given an opportunity to work during registration; why can't retirees be given that same opportunity? Surely with all our years of experience we can still help students, directly or indirectly. Some of you will undoubtedly revel in that brief return to academia and the contacts with former colleagues.

The preceding suggestions were just a few made to Dr. Shugart which he and Ms. Gallagher felt could easily be implemented not only by NHC but also by the district as a whole. Ms. Johnson, other retirees, and I are still waiting.

On a more personal note, I love not having the stress that comes with papergrading or the annoyance of having to contend with those students who feel put upon and complain because college-level work is expected of them. I miss the daily camaraderie of my colleagues in Social Sciences although I am pleased when they give me the opportunity to cover classes the few times when they are ill or on professional leave. I also enjoy the contact with the Counseling Division faculty and staff who, after I expressed an interest, call upon me occasionally to work with them. Not having to plan my life around a teaching schedule as I did for thirty years is pure delight: mountain beauty in the fall and adventures afar in February.

Although you may wish to maintain some ties with the college upon retirement and simply stretch the umbilical cord from what has been a major part of your life for the last ten, twenty, thirty, or more years, without more concern by the college, that cord will be quickly severed. How unfortunate since local retirees, particularly, can continue to do much for the college through word-of-mouth support and in the voting booth--if they have been given the stimulus to do so.

Here's to life after teaching.

Karen Kincheloe
NHC Professor of Geography
1973-1993

May Days

(Editor's Note: This article was originally a memo to NHC Faculty Senate President, Pat Gray. It was subsequently submitted to The Advocate for publication.)

This semester, the Political Science Department is offering two government courses during the three-week mini-semester. Both classes are full. A problem has arisen, which I have discussed with my Division Head, Marilyn Rhinehart, concerning the future of mini-semester classes, which I think should be brought up with the Faculty Senate.

Drs. McMillian and Richards have both indicated that full-time faculty who teach mini-semester courses should not be credited the same as faculty who teach five or six week summer sessions. By their way of thinking, a faculty member on campus thirty-five hours per week for three weeks is working half as much as a faculty member who is on campus for six weeks.

This, of course, assumes that all hours on campus are the same. That an office hour or an hour on campus should and does count the same as an hour of classroom instruction. Each course meets three hours a day, five days a week for three weeks. The actual hours of instruction are the same as for a full summer session. Plus, given six hours of lecture per day, a lot of class preparation will have to occur outside the normal thirty-five hour work week.

In short, these guys think that someone teaching a three-week session is getting away with something. They also expressed concern that other faculty may get upset at those who teach three-week mini sessions. How touching! Instead of letting faculty worry about this, they're worrying about this for us!!!

This is why the Faculty Senate should come up with a stand on mini-semester pay. Should teaching two mini-semester courses count the same as two six-week courses? I think it should, but that's for the Faculty Senate to decide.

In addition, there's no system in place to ensure that instructors teaching mini-semester courses get paid immediately for doing so. Under the current system, there is virtually no way for someone who teaches in May to actually get paid for teaching in May. As it currently stands, we will have to wait until August to get paid for teaching in May. The Faculty Senate should address this problem as well.

In the various discussions I have had with Marilyn, who is sympathetic to my cause, it is interesting to note that, her impression is that if the Deans get their way, we will either not offer mini-semester courses next year, full-time faculty will not teach them, or if they do, they will not be compensated justly for doing so. Not in a single circumstance did these folks mention concern for the students. The classes are full, the students have spoken, I guess. Their concern is fairness to other faculty, which could be handled through a rotating schedule per each department. This year, I stuck my neck out and

feel I should be rewarded for doing so. Maybe next year, someone else can try it. Another concern expressed by Administration is that more students taking mini-semester courses could drain off students from regular summer sessions. So what? If more faculty teach mini-sessions, and summer enrollment declines, that's OK because it will supposedly decline in kind with the reduced number of faculty teaching summer sessions.

I think the mini-sessions are a great idea for us--maybe not for others, like English (where it would be a novel a day)--and if we want to offer them, and if we want to teach them, and if we are willing to lecture six hours a day, so be it.

Timothy Howard
NHC Professor of Government

Judy's Turn to Try

The AFT welcomes Judy Conley to the college district. Judy, Associate Vice-Chancellor of Human Resources, has expressed an interest in working with the union in dealing with a number of issues that she faces, including resolving some personnel issues, some of which have been ongoing for some time. As always, the union is willing to work with anyone in management who approaches us in a spirit of cooperation. As a first step in resolving personnel problems, it is important that employees notify the college. If you encounter a problem, or already have a problem in this area, contact the union or Judy's office directly. The union has a long history of representing employees in such matters, and we look forward to working with Judy.

Alan Hall

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. Also, please consider writing for this publication. Submissions should be sent to the Editor, Steve Davis, at Kingwood College.