

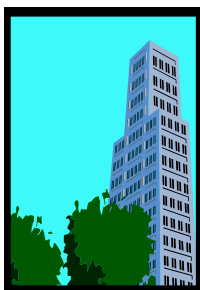


The Advocate

The Corporatization of the College

With the new administration, college employees rightly expected to see significant change here in the system. Those expectations have been realized by a number of changes—some good and some not so good. Many college employees have associated some of the changes witnessed in the last year with a corporate mentality. A corporate approach certainly has some advantages, one of which is the ability to operate on a

large scale. Resources in a corporate environment are typically plentiful enough to run a high quality operation. Corporations can bring together top professionals and provide them tools such as technical equipment, facilities, and money that allow them to do remarkable things. The downside to the corporate model is that it can become an impersonal, sometimes bloated bureaucracy where cronism abounds, where communication is a problem, and where decisions are unilaterally made, top down, without adequate input from appropriate employees. The AFT believes strongly that LSCS must be mindful to avoid these negative characteristics. The union has been following with some concern two particular phenomena often associated with corporate mentality: centralization and the out-sourcing of services.



System Help Desk

Sometimes centralization and out-sourcing combine. First, let's look at centralization. Certainly, it is desirable to centralize some operations: Human Resources, for instance. However, when programs/operations are reorganized and centralized, the administration must be sensitive to the human element. Every college employee displaced by centralization deserves assistance in finding another position within LSCS.

Some time ago, the AFT was notified of plans to reorganize Institutional Technology and centralize some of its functions. We were assured that no one would lose a job in the newly named OTS reorganization. That promise was later reinforced in a system-wide email dated April 4, 2008 from LSCS Chief Information Officer Shah Ardalan. When the union later learned that the Help Desk services were going to be contracted out and some system employees might be laid off, we were obviously concerned. I contacted Ardalan about the email guaranteeing no job loss. He pointed out that the email specifically mentioned Phase I of the OTS reorganization and did not necessarily apply to remaining phases.



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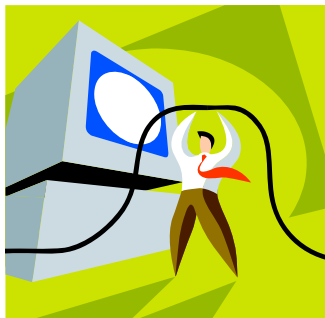
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In an open meeting on September 9, 2008, at LS-NH, Ardalan explained the rationale for his recommendation to contract out the Help Desk. The rationale included dissatisfaction with the level of Help Desk service based on surveys of employees and students and on his own professional opinion. The AFT's look at the surveys revealed a mixed bag. Faculty generally was happy with the old Help Desk, but varying levels of dissatisfaction were evident in the student surveys. If, in fact, contracting out the Help Desk were warranted, let us hope that the administration will engage in the same thoughtful analysis of SunGard's performance in determining whether on not to continue with this vendor for the Help Desk. Early anecdotal reports this semester of the new Help Desk have not all been positive.

When in the NH meeting, CIO Ardalan was questioned as to what would happen to the LSCS employees displaced by the outside vendor, he acknowledged that "Some of them might be affected," a response that many audience members found safely non-specific, thus not very reassuring.



At the November 6, 2008, Board of Trustees meeting, the trustees unanimously approved Dr. Carpenter to execute a contract for the "Purchase of Technology Help Desk Support Services." The low bid was SunGard Higher Education, the same company that contracted Help Desk services when Dr. Carpenter was at Community College of Southern Nevada. LSCS Chief Information Officer Shah Ardalan worked for SunGard at the time. The vendor contract is for three years with an annual cost of \$923,158.00

In mid-November of 2008, at my regular monthly meeting with Dr. Carpenter, our conversation included the fate of the Help Desk employees potentially displaced by the Sungard contract. He indicated that it had taken two months to work through everything but a good outcome had resulted. Of

the 14 affected employees, one left the system with help in finding another job, one moved to part-time and returned to school, and one is out on leave. The remaining 11 were all placed within the system, and there was no loss in salary for any of them. Layoffs should never be taken lightly, and the AFT is glad to see the effort to keep our employees within the system.

My next question for Dr. Carpenter had to do with rumors that the system would next contract out the technicians who work on the campuses providing services for classrooms, computer labs, and offices. He insisted that "No plan is out there. There is no hidden agenda. I don't know what we will do. It is premature to draw any conclusions at this point."

He went on to say that the college will solicit bidders for software packages and data control, and those proposals will likely include outsourcing recommendations. He wants the system's needs to drive the discussion. He pointed out that if the system, in fact, were to contract out the tech positions, the college could require the contractor to hire our techs. I expressed skepticism on this point. Often a vendor will agree to hire current employees and then lay them off after six months. In addition, there are benefits and retirement issues at stake. Dr. Carpenter acknowledged the concern.

He then made an interesting point: he wants to avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy. Specifically, if the current techs, in fear of layoffs, leave the system and significantly reduce their numbers, it would make contracting out an easier call. The AFT recognizes that the techs, of course, then face a difficult choice: to leave before layoffs might happen or stay on with the hope that the system will not contract out. Dr. Carpenter insists, "My commitment is to the care of our employees," and he points out that his efforts on behalf of former Help Desk employees reflect that commitment.





Another Outsourcing Scenario: NH Food Service

Last year, the AFT was notified by campus administration that North Harris was considering contracting out Food Services. Complaints about services, food quality, and budget deficits were cited as the reasons. In this instance, I was personally assured that “No one will lose a job.” That same statement was made to the FS workers themselves at a meeting which AFT officers attended. The FS workers and the union officers took that promise to mean that the administration would work to find positions in the system for all of the Food Service employees. I was glad to hear that assurance because the FS workers made very little money and they needed the health and retirement benefits from the college.



The AFT circulated a list among the FS workers by which to identify skills or interests they had. Our intention was to use the list to assist in identifying where these employees might be placed. Johanna Boley, Vice President of Administrative Services, worked with the AFT in the compilation of this list.

That list proved useless when the AFT was informed that all FS workers, with the exception of one, would move over to work for the new cafeteria vendor. When I questioned the promise of “No one will lose a job,” the answer was “They will have jobs—with the vendor.” Apparently, the union—three officers and a number of FS workers—misunderstood the nature of the promise.

I countered that the AFT had understood that the jobs would be within the system. We were concerned about retirement benefits, adequate health insurance, and the value of these employees’ long

term service to the system. When I pointed out that we had completed the skills and interests list to help with placement within the system, an effort assisted by Ms. Boley, the answer was, “That’s not going to happen.” Employees involved felt as if important, life-affecting information was dribbled out by the administration, drop-by-drop, as deemed necessary to the moment or the question.

The union was assured that FS workers would receive comparable hours, salaries, and benefits from the outside contractor. They did not receive any of the three. Since August 2008, the employees report that they have had difficulty getting forty hours per week. In addition, had these employees continued to work for the system, they would have received a salary while the system was shut down for two weeks during Hurricane Ike. Instead, they were without income for two weeks. The vendor has offered health insurance to these employees. However, the vendor’s cost is prohibitive, so they remain uninsured.

The AFT is not taking the position that the FS problems cited by the administration are inaccurate. Our position is that there were other available remedies to resolve the problems. Kicking the FS employees to the curb seems especially heartless.

Contracting out perhaps saves money in the short term. In the long term, measured on a human scale, the negative effects can be profound.

NH Custodial Services

For a long time, the custodial staff at NH has been understaffed, causing their workload to increase significantly. For several years, the union has been promised that vacant positions would be filled and new positions would be created as new buildings opened. Instead, however, the NH administration de-





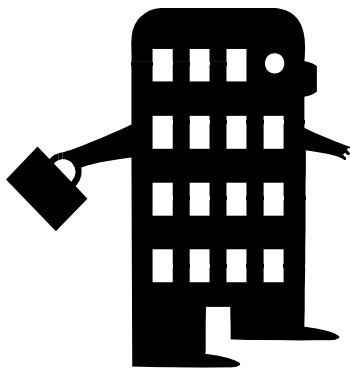
cided to outsource. Custodial Services for the Academic, Energy Training Center, and Childcare buildings are now contracted out to a private vendor. With more and more contracting out, NH and the system in general are looking more like private businesses. Interestingly, "Lone Star College – North Harris was named company of the year at the North Houston-Greenspoint Chamber's recent Starlight Gala. This award honors a company that has a strong commitment and support for the chamber, said Heggie Gray, president of the chamber" (*Houston Chronicle*, Dec. 25, 2008, Z-14).

Conclusion

The corporate world offers many possible benefits but can also turn into a cutthroat environment.

LSCS must be mindful of the potentially negative effects of the corporate model.

Cronyism, top-down decision making, the downside of centralizations and contracting out should be avoided. We hear upper administration, who, of course, is never the target of outsourcing, talk about the legacy of LSCS established by current and former employees. That admiration is belied when the administration embraces too fully the dark side of the corporate model. The college, after all, is not a corporation. LSCS is an institution of higher learning, and our focus is people. LSCS should never lose sight of that focus.



Alan Hall

Lessons Learned in Signature Course Development

On November 25, 2008, one history professor from each of the five LSCS colleges, including myself, was cordially invited to meet with Dr. James

Baker, DSTC Director of Course Development, to begin work on the development of a "signature" 1301 history Internet class. Having never heard of a signature course, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. In fact, before I agreed to attend the meeting, I replied to the invitation with a request for some clarification on that issue. Finally, each history professor received an email from Dr. Baker on December 2, a few hours before the scheduled meeting, that contained some explanation of signature courses and what the meeting was about.

Unfortunately, I was taken aback at the outset of the meeting when we were presented with contracts to sign by which we would agree to provide content for the development of a signature course in return for modest monetary remuneration. Perhaps because I'm married to a licensed attorney, I began wondering right away why we were not informed of the contract before the meeting, not allowed to see it in advance, and expected to sign it before we left. Moreover, the contract did not address intellectual property issues. After listening to Dr. Baker's PowerPoint-enhanced sales pitch about signature courses, I explained that I would not sign the contract. In fact, none of the history faculty signed it before we left the meeting that day. Before we left, Dr. Baker expressed concern that he had never before allowed the unsigned contracts out of the meeting, which led me to wonder if faculty in previous meetings had signed the contracts without opportunity to seek advice about the wisdom of doing so.



My understanding from Dr. Baker's explanation was that a signature course would be a model 1301 history Internet class developed by experienced faculty who were recommended for the process by their colleges' Vice Presidents of Instruction. Try as we might, we could not get a clear definition



from Dr. Baker of “content” or a clear explanation of the necessity of developing such a course. Regarding the first issue, I believe all of the history faculty present was concerned about relinquishing control of content each had developed over the course of many years of graduate training and teaching. Would other faculty, full-time or adjunct, use our content without attribution, raising issues of academic integrity, and who would own that content?

Would faculty be pressured to present US history from whatever perspective the signature course team used in development of the course?



If “content” meant simply developing “a common look and feel” (words I believe I’ve heard Dr. Carpenter use in various venues) for 1301 history Internet classes, I think all of us were comfortable with that. If, however, “content” denoted lecture notes, we had a number of objections. I believe the majority of experienced teachers would agree that a class can only be taught well if the instructor “makes it his/her own.” In other words, high quality teaching cannot occur if the instructor is merely using a “canned course” previously developed by experts because good teaching requires individual creativity and spontaneity. Moreover, if we did relinquish control of our content, what influence would we have over how it might be used in the future?

As the contentious debates over national history standards in the mid-1990s made painfully obvious, the perspective from which US history is taught is fraught with political issues that stem from deeply held convictions. Consequently, historians, like many other academics, tend to carefully guard their academic freedom. Since none of those issues was addressed in the contract, at best we might get verbal assurance that we need not worry about them.

The history faculty present in the meeting offered to develop a repository of resources that all LSCS history faculty might use to develop individual Internet classes. We specifically named valuable elements that could be included in such a repository: bibliographies, historical maps, images, political cartoons, glossaries, primary and secondary sources in the public domain, etc. We also welcomed assistance and advice from course development experts at the system office on ADA compliance, copyright issues, and the unique technological issues that arise in the development and teaching of online classes. Dr. Baker seemed pleased by these suggestions, but he indicated they were not enough to fulfill our proposed contractual obligation to provide “content” for a signature 1301 history course.

At one point during the meeting, I offered to sign the contract if we could modify the wording, particularly in regard to “content.” Rather than verbally reply to that offer, Dr. Baker only looked at me and smiled. After going round and round for at least an hour on these issues, one of my colleagues began asking what would happen if none of us was willing to participate in the process. Dr. Baker obsequiously replied that he wanted us at the table because we were so experienced and had been recommended by our respective Vice-Presidents of Instruction. My colleagues continued to press the point, and Dr. Baker finally replied with a statement so striking I felt compelled to write it down verbatim: “It will be done with or without you.” Although Dr. Baker maintained a gentle and polite demeanor throughout the meeting, I found that statement quite troubling. In fact, I believe some might interpret it as a threat to our future employment with LSCS. At that point, I decided my initial decision not to sign the contract was a good one and it would be foolish of me to sign it without first seeking ad-



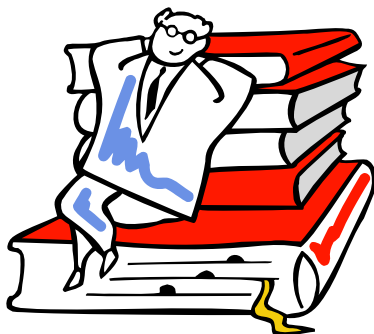


vice from friends and colleagues who were not present in the meeting.

I described the meeting to my attorney-wife that evening, and her immediate response was that a contract presented in such a manner might not be enforceable for a number of reasons. A few days later, I described the meeting to a neighbor who is also a licensed attorney and received essentially the same response. My understanding is that, in order for a contract to be enforceable, both parties must freely enter into it (without duress or undue influence), should be allowed ample time to review it, negotiate its terms, consult with trusted advisors, etc. I then began to wonder how a person who signed such a contract could have any legal assurance that the other party would interpret its terms fairly.



In the meeting, Dr. Baker's primary rationale for the development of signature courses (it seems the process had already begun in other disciplines) was that, with the projected rapid growth of LSCS, we would have to hire new faculty post haste. In addition, because of overwhelming student demand for Internet classes, it would be necessary for newly hired, inexperienced faculty to begin teaching online classes right away. This rationale didn't seem plausible to me at the time and still doesn't. I've been chair of the North Harris Department of Social Sciences for the past three years, and from my vantage point at least, demand for Internet classes appears to have leveled off. Other department chairs have reported the same phenomenon to



me. Furthermore, although our department currently needs more full-time history faculty to teach traditional face-to-face classes, it already has enough to teach all of the Internet classes we offer, so I have not felt any pressure to assign online history classes to adjunct faculty. Most importantly, hiring faculty now or in the future who are not qualified to develop their own courses, online or otherwise, would necessitate a significant lowering of the academic standards that I share with my colleagues. Rather than use centralized course standardization to prepare for poorly qualified faculty or for assigning classes to inexperienced faculty on short notice, I would prefer that LSCS maintain high academic standards by continuing to hire highly-qualified, experienced faculty. To state it another way, it

sounded to me as if Dr.

Baker were raising a serious hiring issue and proposing that it be addressed as a course development issue. He also spoke of



current problems, claiming some faculty have used inappropriate, even vulgar, language in their Internet classes or used flashing yellow text on a green background, which I imagine would probably be problematic for most students, certainly for vision impaired students. But once more, I believe these are training and personnel issues and, if and when that sort of thing occurs, they should be addressed as such.

Because of Dr. Baker's inability to articulate a cogent rationale for the need to develop signature courses, the thought crossed my mind that perhaps administrators at the system office were offering us a pittance to develop Internet classes that could be inexpensively staffed with adjunct faculty. With all of Dr. Carpenter's emphasis on cutting administrative costs, I wondered if perhaps there were also plans afoot to cut instructional costs by outsourcing online instruction to adjuncts.

I also felt that Dr. Baker skirted the academic in-



tegrity and academic freedom issues by asserting that no faculty member would be *required* to use the signature course. Even if that were true, and we had no contractual assurance that it was, I wonder how we would prevent faculty from using content without attribution or from feeling implicit pressure to conform to the signature course. The former issue seems problematic if inexperienced faculty is assigned online classes to teach on short notice. The latter issue seems particularly relevant to a new faculty member who might be reluctant to "buck the system," as it were, during her/his probationary period of employment.

I would add that the LSCS colleges already have many ways to mentor new faculty, both through formal professional development opportunities and informally within the highways and byways of LSCS. I suspect the vast majority of LSCS faculty is much more comfortable with mentoring than with course standardization and that they frequently share with their colleagues insights gained through teaching experience.



Apparently, news of the history faculty's meeting with Dr. Baker reverberated throughout LSCS rather quickly. The next morning, I met with Alan Hall because I believed issues had come up in the meeting that the AFT might help me with. As we met, I received a call from Dorothy Reade, North Harris Faculty Senate President, during which she immediately asked about the meeting. My impression is that all of the faculty senate presidents had already heard about the events of the previous day. Around mid-day, the five history faculty involved received a request from Dr. William Durham's assistant for a conference call to clear up "misunderstandings" that arose in the meeting. Dr. Durham is Associate Vice-Chancellor of LSCS-

Online (eCollege) and Dr. Baker's supervisor.

Later that afternoon, the five of us also received an email from Dr. Durham in which he expressed regret for what had happened in the previous day's meeting. He explained that the information we were given was inaccurate, implied that it was presented to us improperly, and also explained that he had spent the entire day "solving these issues internally." I was quite pleased that Dr. Durham assured us that the development of signature Internet courses was not designed to limit academic freedom and that he was opposed to "canned" courses. He then offered to meet with us in person, instead of meeting by conference call.



At the following meeting (12/09/08), which was attended by the five history faculty in the previous meeting, two faculty senate presidents, and AFT president Alan Hall, Dr. Durham encouraged the history faculty to use the signature course development program in whatever way would be most useful to us. I felt much more comfortable with the entire process. Although we did discuss the issue of the contracts, none of us was asked to sign them in this meeting and, to my knowledge, none of the history faculty has done so. At this time, I do not know what the history faculty at the other LSCS colleges plan to do, but Dr. David Davis and I are planning to continue developing the Blackboard Vista 1301 and 1302 history templates that we already share, drawing on assistance from course development experts at DSTC whenever we need it.

I believe this entire misunderstanding could have been avoided by better communication. Rather than include faculty in the development of the concept of signature courses, administrators at the system office simply tried to sell it to us. I had no idea that I needed a signature course and, quite frankly,



still doubt its value. Although I tried to find out more about the first meeting before it occurred, the most informative communication was Dr. Baker's email that arrived just a few hours before the meeting was scheduled to begin. Dr. Baker seemed to assume he would deliver a brief sales pitch, we'd all eagerly sign the contracts, and we would begin creating a signature course.

During the first meeting, I felt reassured that the reaction of the other faculty seemed similar to mine, and in fact found myself rather proud to be a member of such a dedicated and knowledgeable group. After both meetings, I spoke to as many faculty as I could (at North Harris and the other four LSCS colleges as well), primarily in search of reality checks. I wanted to be sure I wasn't over-reacting or reading too much into the handling of the process. As I did so, I felt the same reassurance and pride. I was also impressed by both Dorothy Reade's and Alan Hall's willingness to rearrange their busy schedules to help me address these important issues. And last but not least, I was pleased by Dr. Durham's willingness to listen to the concerns of LSCS history faculty.



I believe I learned some valuable lessons from this entire experience. To borrow MBA terminology I'm not entirely accustomed to using, good leadership requires "buy in" from all of the "stakeholders." Unfortunately, as has been amply documented in the *Advocate*, both the quantity and quality of communication from the system office seem to have declined rather precipitously of late. I wouldn't be surprised if this situation will lead to similar misunderstandings in the future. I also discovered I was not alone in wanting system office administrators to curtail the PowerPoint sales jobs and focus on providing detailed information about what they envision for LSC-Online (eCollege).

(Even the name has been rather ambiguous for some time now.) Sometimes I find myself wondering if system office administrators have a grand vision that they're not sharing with faculty or if they're not entirely sure about the direction of LSC-Online (eCollege) themselves.

I taught philosophy for six years at Tomball College in a previous life, so perhaps readers will indulge my abstract musings about the most important lessons I have taken from this experience. I believe all of us need to remember that we are members of a team ultimately working toward the same goal, providing quality higher education to all of our students. When faculty, staff, and administrators keep that common goal in mind, we can collaboratively continue to improve the learning experience for our students, despite all of the pressures caused by the growth of LSCS. More than anything, I believe it is imperative that faculty, staff, and administrators be honest and direct in their communication with one another. Despite clichés to the contrary, honesty has nothing to do with brutality; professional communication is respectful precisely because it is honest.

Jim Good, Ph.D.
Chair, History, LSC-NH

Half A Loaf and the Ancient Mariner

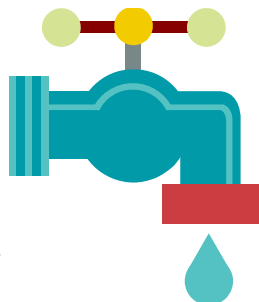
On my way to the Academic Building from the parking lot early last Friday morning (January 23), I was met just outside the building by our LS-NH President, Dr. Steve Head. He told me that the electricity was out in the building. He said he had been called at 12:30 in the morning with the news that a transformer had blown. Then he proceeded to talk for about thirty minutes about the





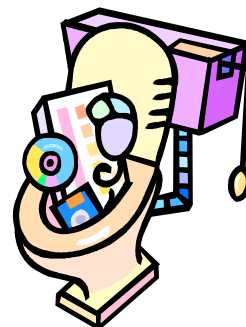
latest travails in the ongoing saga of the misfortunes of North Harris College: water lines that kept breaking, bathrooms not functioning, erratic power outages, mysterious cracks; I felt like Coleridge's wedding guest.

Unlike the wedding guest, however, I already knew all about the albatross. I live and teach in the oldest section of the oldest building in all of Lone Star College System. When I arrive in the morning, I don't ask our staff assistant "how things are." I ask her what the latest emergency is: can we expect the computers to work today? Are any of the bathrooms working? Should students even attempt to use the elevators? We have had and continue to have problems with plumbing (the bathrooms at the end of our hall haven't worked for ages), heating and cooling (our ad hoc computer classrooms were for years burning hot in the summer and early fall—one fall semester our then President, Dr. Sam, put barrels of ice and bottled water in those classrooms), and loss of electricity (all the old-hands keep flashlights, candles and matches at the ready). Our President must spend a good bit of his time simply monitoring the anarchy.



One would think that such problems would not be allowed to go on and on and on. But then, we are told, it is the same everywhere. We are only a part of a trillion dollar infrastructure problem in the United States. Yet time was, a few years ago, we had actual hopes of a complete overhaul of our building. In 2005, I was on a planning committee for North Harris College. We were told at that time that the new D-Tech building, only half of which was built, would be completed first to provide space for all of us in the Academic Building. Then the plan was (or so we were told) to completely renovate the building. We were told to dream; so we looked at statistics on growth for the area, optimum room sizes for computer classrooms, the proper kind of lighting for classrooms and offices, soundproofing, new lighting, redesigned and

enlarged office space, and so on. We were discussing how many classrooms should be computer classrooms, what their dimensions and equipment should be, what classrooms at other colleges and universities looked like, how we wanted office space to be configured and equipped. We were excited. Maybe we would be around to see the new Academic Building rise from the ashes of the old, like the fabled Phoenix, before we all retired.



But then, as with all dreams, reality intruded. The bond failed, we got a new district administration, and our President, Dr. Sam, moved on. The new administration gave us a new name and proposed a new bond package. So, with the run-up to the new bond issue last year, our hopes were revived. Something would surely be done about the Academic Building. The bond passed, and I was again asked to be on the committee to guide the renovation of the Academic Building. When I went to the initial meeting with the architects, however, I learned that priorities had changed. The renovation of our building was to be at the bottom of the projects slated for North Harris College. Other, more urgent projects, such as a new Student Services building and a new Health Sciences building, would come first. But I assumed that, as before, we would be asked to "dream" and work on developing a first-class teaching facility. So I began digging out and dusting off the files from the 2005 committee.

Then A Curious Thing Happened

First, I missed the second meeting. While I am not one who likes meetings, I almost never miss those I am assigned, and I certainly did not intend to miss this one. When I realized I had missed the meeting, I e-mailed our Vice-President to apologize. She had already sent out an e-mail listing what had been discussed for the Academic Building. In my reply to



the e-mail, I wrote: “One thing I did not see on the list of ‘Improvements’ (and I thought they were going to simply gut the building and start over): faculty offices. Down here in the bowels of the building (even though we are on the second floor), we in A 221 have continued to experience a rash of illnesses—I had a sore throat, for example, for a month that only began to clear up over Thanksgiving. Admitting that it is not scientific, we all suspect some form of ‘sick-building’ syndrome. Will the AC ducts, flooring, and offices be ripped out and replaced?”



The VP simply replied that I should suggest something and send it on to her and the chairman of the committee. However, she forwarded my e-mail on to Terry Erwin, the Project Director, Lone Star College System, Facilities Planning and Construction Management. So before I could reply with suggestions, I received his message to the VP which she forwarded to me. In it he said:

There are currently plans to do some building automation controls replacements, which will include many parts of the air handling system (several are scheduled to occur over the Winter break) and will continue into spring. There is no plans [sic] to “gut” the building, but we will be doing some renovation work in many areas, depending on the committee’s recommendations, and budget constraints.

I have had some studies done in the area on a limited basis (mold and asbestos), and have a more comprehensive battery set up before we begin the renovation project, but no real problems have been found. I have no evidence what so ever of the building being ‘sick’ in any way.

So I learned that there was to be no “major” renovation of the building. However, after talking with my suite mates (and we have been talking off and

on about our habitat for some time), I put together a wish list of “suggestions” for the VP and the committee:

“I think I speak for a lot of people in this part of the building when I express the following: We would like a building that is not hot in summer and cold in winter, that does not vary in temperature so much between one room and another that a coat is needed in the classroom and a bathing suit in the office; we would like a building in which the bathrooms not only work but are clean and efficient (and in which the plumbing is new and the floors not grungy); we would like offices that are not dark, uninviting ‘cupboards’; we would like hallways that are wide, well-lit, clean, and inviting (with some sort of walls that do not scuff up when students lean up against them); we would like stairwells that are not so narrow that two people can barely pass, and that are made so that they are easily kept clean; we would like more abundant electrical outlets in classrooms, office suites and offices; we would like clocks that work; we would like student areas on each floor that have laptop outlets; we would like, in short, a building not only conducive to daily activities, but one which does not exude gloom upon entering. Why, by the way, are the high school buildings constructed over the past few years so much nicer than ours? Have you been to Wunsche? Dekaney? What do you suppose the students from those schools think when they enter the Academic Building? This building may not be clinically sick, but I know that I have to scrub my office twice a year just to keep the dust bunnies from eating me; there have to be monsters in the rest of the building.”



I then copied my e-mail to our Dean, who has advocated the complete overhaul of this building for a long time. I wrote: “I knew we had been put to



the end of the line—aren't we always?—but I thought a more extensive makeover was in the plans—see what I get for missing a meeting.”

Her reply was not encouraging. She said: “The plans have totally changed from the original Master Plan. The top priority now is the Health Sciences building, followed by a new student services building. Then come improvements to the Career Technology building, followed by renovation of Winship and Academic. The thinking seems to be that any major changes to Academic will have to come in the next bond proposal. We are at the very end of the line. We will get extra space when student services move out of Academic, which Steve Head wants to be converted to classrooms. There was talk at the last meeting of moving our computer labs to that area and creating a space that was more suitable for them, maybe even adding a new one or two. It all depends on how much money is left.”



I replied to the effect that what we had been led to believe, that the Academic Building would be completely renovated, was then so much hooey. The Dean reiterated:

“No, we're at the end of the list. Terry Erwin says there may be another bond issue in three years. I had not heard about the laptop outlets in the floor. That's another suggestion I can pass on. I think the electrical system and the air conditioning system are going to be worked on over the holidays. More work is planned in that area during the renovation. The bathrooms, I'm sure, will be addressed. That's on Steve Head's radar. They are throwing around the idea of another computer lab for us, and the possibility has been raised about moving some walls to make some of the classrooms larger. I doubt anything will happen to the

offices.”

By this time finals were upon us, and I had to miss another meeting because it was scheduled during one of my tests. Then, after the Christmas break, we had a meeting on Friday, the ninth of January. At that meeting we were told what was going on, and a few questions were asked, but little input was asked for. Most meetings these days seem to be one way information sessions. As I had said earlier in my e-mail to our VP, I saw little reason for being on the committee, since the major decisions had already been made. “Given the givens,” I said, “I really don't see that there is much scope for faculty input.” She agreed.



So here I am, sitting in the office I have occupied for 25 years. It's a Friday; no one is around but me and the dust bunnies. The bathrooms are still out of order; the computer classrooms are frigid. I received an e-mail about the elevators being out because of last Friday's electrical shutdown.

But There is Hope.

We are told that the bathrooms will be completely redone; we are told we'll have six instead of four computer classrooms and that they will be up-to-date; we are told that the AC has been fixed and that it will just take a while for the system to balance out; we are told that the electrical system will be upgraded. Maybe these things will come to be before I retire; after all, a half a loaf is better than no bread at all. I just hope it is enough to break the spell. The Ancient Mariner needs a rest.

Dr. Robert Miller, Professor of English
Lone Star College: North Harris



Editorial Addendum:

A quick survey of the Academic Building's major malfunctions in the first three weeks of this semester produced a short list of things not working at one time or another, often at the same time.

- Elevator (chronic malfunction)
- Heat/Air
- Water/bathrooms *** (often closed for a week or more)
- Electricity
- Phones
- Printers
- Computers
- Copy machines
- Outdoor lights
- Colleague (the king of all malfunctions)
- New carpet, laid recently, already loose and dangerous

A few of the loss of services, particularly electricity and water, caused some office secretaries to sit in the dark until 4:30 pm when their work day was officially over. The custodial crew members had to stay at LSC-NH until 9:30 P.M. yet were unable to do the cleaning since they lacked light to see and the electricity to run their tools. One wonders why the administration did not send these employees home.

*****An ironic situation too striking to ignore:**

Last semester the walkway leading from the faculty/staff parking lot to Academic was enhanced with rows of azalea plants, a very nice addition. Within the last couple of weeks, however, the landscapers have been busy digging trenches for piping to water the plants because our dry weather has required some maintenance person to spend most of the day watering with a single hose. So, we are pleased to see that the plants will now continue to

grow and prosper with the new water piping; we just wish the restrooms and water fountains would work in our building. Sigh.

Pat Gray, editor

Questions about our Pharmaceutical Supply System

The AFT has been hearing anecdotal responses about our new pharmaceutical supply system, CareMark, but we have no clear idea of the range or degree of difference between Medco and CareMark. We are therefore asking the employees at LSCS who use this service to send The Advocate any experiences,

good or bad, with the two systems. The decision to change carriers was made at state level, so any modification, if necessary, will have to be done in Austin. We would nonetheless like to know your thoughts on how our meds are supplied and any problems or pleasures you've experienced. If you are interested in responding, please send your information to me, Patsy.R.Gray@lonestar.edu, and we will try to make an effort on your behalf. If you're happy, tell us; if you're not, please let us know.



Pat Gray
Editor, The Advocate

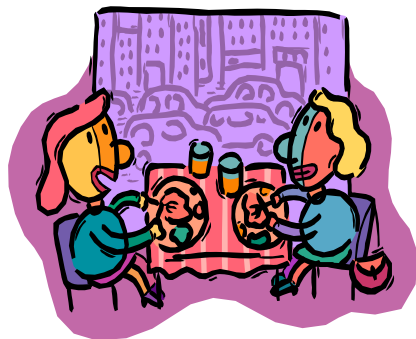




Kudos to Our New Cafeteria

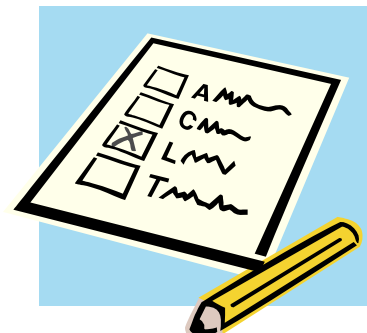
Despite the many difficulties discovered and remedied as the construction crew worked to overhaul our LS-NH cafeteria space, the wait has been worth it. I made my first trip over there this morning (2/9) and was very impressed with the new design, the seating innovations which allow student groups to separate from general seating, the sparkling cleanliness, and the overall “feel” of the place. The cafeteria was inviting and serene, very different from our former site. It offers a place to eat, to visit with a friend, or to study together in a group. It is what a college food area should be. Congratulations to all those involved in its construction. Cheers!

Pat Gray
Editor



Election Report

The AFT - Lone Star College constitution calls for election of officers in November of even number years. This past election, the union had one executive committee position in which there were two candidates, Staff Vice President Kingwood. In that election, Laura Codner was victorious.



Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$30.30
Full-time Professional Staff	\$26.50
Full-time Support Staff	\$22.90
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$11.00

Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on page 20 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at: www.aft-lonestarcollege.org.



Resolve



To ring in the New Year with union member **savings!**

IT'S RESOLUTION TIME... the perfect time to take control and get your life into better shape. This year, resolve to take full advantage of your union's benefits. There's no better way to *stretch your hard-earned paycheck* and enrich your life both on and off the job. Check out the special savings and customized services available only to union members. Here are some of the ways your union benefits can help you make a strong start this New Year.

SHAPE UP your body and mind

- Shed holiday pounds and high rates with union discounts at more than 2,000 health clubs nationwide.

Including Bally Total Fitness, select Gold's Gyms and other top fitness centers.

- Save up to 40% on movie tickets.
- Get discount DVD rentals at Blockbuster.
- Read about something new. Find great selections and bargain prices at Powell's Book Store, the largest unionized internet bookseller.



FIX your finances

- Get **FREE** credit counseling and budget advice from professionals carefully chosen to protect the interests of union workers.
- Save 15% on all myFICO credit score products, including credit reports and personalized score explanation.
- Check our easy-to-use loan payment calculators and other financial tools to get out of debt faster and make smart decisions about your financing your mortgage, cars and lifestyle choices.
- Find out how to correct errors on credit reports and qualify for lower rates on credit cards and loans.



IMPROVE your connections

- Take an additional 10% off any new or renewed service plan with AT&T*. Three ways to save: 1. Take this ad to your local AT&T store; 2. Online at UnionPlus.org/ATT; 3. Call 1-800-897-7046
- Connect with the family on a dream cruise anywhere in the world on Norwegian Cruise Lines at a minimum 5% discount and up to 30% off selected sailings.
- Use Union Plus Voice with your existing broadband connection and save 85% on your phone bill.



*The 30% discount is not available on additional line for family plan and unlimited plans. Discount available only to qualified union members. Union identification is required. In-store discount only at AT&T stores, not at any authorized dealer or kiosk. Cannot be combined with other discounts. Savings on 3G iPhones purchased at AT&T stores only.

To learn more about the **benefits**, and **savings** available to you visit,

www.UnionPlus.org



Campus Updates

The AFT was gratified at its last executive meeting by the many reports of our students' universal enthusiasm concerning the recent presidential inauguration. The various colleges and centers worked hard to provide live coverage of the event so our students could see history in the making. It's wonderful to see the entire system working so hard to deliver this "teachable moment" for our students. PG

NORTH HARRIS COLLEGE

Here at LS – North Harris, we continue to serve our members by advocating for their interests and by acting as an institutional liaison between the administration and faculty/staff. On Inauguration Day, we were especially impressed by our students' enthusiasm. The college made no fewer than four viewing locations available for students, all of which were well attended. For many of our students, this election was the first in which they had voted, and the energy and excitement were palpable.

We take great pride in the caliber and accomplishments of our colleagues, and we would like to congratulate all of LS – North Harris Staff and Faculty Excellence Award Winners.

Bruce Machart, AFT Faculty VP

TOMBALL COLLEGE

Aside from hiring a new president and a new dean in one division, the concerns of LS -Tomball faculty and staff do not differ from those of employees across LSCS. Like our colleagues at other campuses and satellites, we are watching closely what transpires as our college system tries to create uniformity among online courses. And like our coworkers across the LSCS system, we paused on Inauguration Day to reflect on and celebrate the history unfolding before our eyes and the eyes of the nation. In the Commons area and in classrooms across campus, students, faculty, and staff crowded together to watch the inauguration and other fanfare on large screen televisions, computer screens, and projector screens. Some people attended classes that they were not even enrolled in, just to watch the event. The college provided a buffet line in the Commons to mark the special occasion. It was a proud day for all of us.

Catherine Olson, AFT Secretary

KINGWOOD COLLEGE

Things seem to be quieting down after the hustle and bustle of registration. There has been no pressing faculty or staff matter this semester. It was great to see many of our members and many System wide visitors on campus at the MLK kick-off to hear Dr. Rod Paige's address. I want to thank the media and technology departments for all of the sites around campus that broadcast the Inauguration. I hope our members have taken advantage of payroll deductions for AFT dues. We will be looking for a date to have Alan visit Kingwood and give a state of the union address. I want to personally thank Dr. Lee Topham for attending the AFT Executive Committee meeting in my place.

Rich Almstedt, AFT Faculty VP

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Welcome back! We hope all of you had a wonderful and restful break. Now that we are back, the AFT has several events coming up. On Conference Day, the AFT will host an Open House/Question and Answer Session. Stop by and have a snack and chat with other members and sign up to have your dues paid through payroll deduction. Not a member? Stop by have a snack and learn more about the AFT. Everyone is welcome!

The AFT is also looking forward to bringing AFT member Bryan Barrow's MLK presentation to campus. More information on this phenomenal presentation is coming soon! LSC-Montgomery is also hosting the Spring End of the Year Celebration. We are taking suggestions for a fun place to have this event. If you have a favorite restaurant, drop us a line. More details coming soon.

Inauguration day at LSC-Montgomery was a beautiful sight! The commons in building A was packed: there must have been at least 300 students and employees. In the small foyer in the learning center (building C) approximately 30 students, staff, and faculty were jam-packed to watch the live event. All over the campus there were tvs and monitors plugged into the live feeds and almost everyone stopped to watch the historic event.

Congratulations to this year's winners!

Have a great semester!

Julie Alber, Vice President, Faculty
Cheri Barlow, AFT Staff Vice President

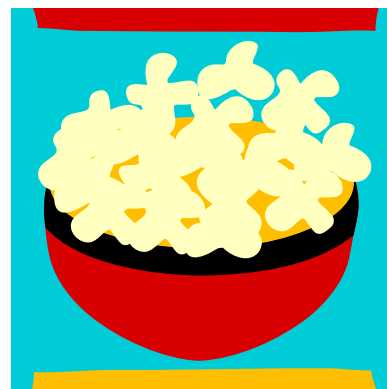


All is going well at Cy-Fair. We did have one meeting between an AFT member and a dean. The meeting went very well, and all parties left feeling that all the conflicts have been resolved.

Robert McGehee, AFT Faculty VP



Approximately 220 people watched as Senator Obama became President Obama. The crowd cheered heartily as Chief Justice Roberts shook President Obama's hand. All stayed to hear President Obama speak. Many listened intently. A significant number stayed to watch the inaugural events that followed with the crowd finally breaking up around 1:30 p.m.



It was inspiring to see such interest generated at Lone Star College-Fairbanks Center by the inaugural event.

Earl J. Brewer

FAIRBANKS CENTER

Students, faculty, and staff began gathering around 10:30 a.m. to witness the astounding, historical event of the inauguration of Senator Barack Obama, the United States' first African-American President. The atmosphere was full of anticipation and excitement. Popcorn and lemonade were served by Velva Jenkins, who is one of the call center staff at Fairbanks Center. Follett Bookstore Gift certificates worth \$25.00 were given away as door prizes. Fortune smiled on four students whose names were drawn.





Faculty and Staff Excellence Winners

NORTH HARRIS COLLEGE

Faculty	Staff
Shae Adkins	Ira Brecher
Shirley Ennis	Brian Dooley
Brian Kilpatrick	Hilda Harman
Kendall Lawrence	Charlotte Harrison
Danel Olson	Stacey Williams

KINGWOOD COLLEGE

Faculty	Staff
Stephanie Doyen	Twyla Coy
Betsy Morgan	Earnest Harris
Jimmi Rushing	Janis Terry

LSCS—Systems Office

Staff
Anne Money
Anita Schiro
Marie Thibodeaux

Congratulations to All!



MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Faculty	Staff
Deborah Cox	Mary Ann Mendoza
Jeff Groah	Amy Cooper
Sue Jan Herber	Bill Hare
Glen Killian	Dealva Engelhardt

TOMBALL COLLEGE

Faculty	Staff
Katherine Sanchez	Pam Kent
Melinda Coleman	Patty Krugh
David Birch	Buddy Wiggin
Tom Rogers	

CY-FAIR COLLEGE

Faculty	Staff
Jonathan Durm	Celia Barnes
Claire Phillops	Margaret Gibson
Suzanne Shield-Polk	Cindy Harris
Ester Robinson	Lauren Knowles FBC





AFT-Lone Star College

GOALS

- To promote academic excellence
- To protect academic freedom in higher education
- To preserve and protect the integrity and unique identity of each of the institutions of higher education in Texas
- To protect the dignity and rights of faculty against discrimination
- To ensure that faculty have an effective voice on all matters pertaining to their welfare
- To secure for all members the rights to which they are entitled
- To raise the standards of the profession by establishing professional working conditions
- To encourage democratization of higher education
- To promote the welfare of the citizens of Texas by providing better educational opportunities for all
- To initiate and support state legislation which will benefit the students and faculty of Texas
- To promote and assist the formation and growth of Texas United Faculty chapters throughout Texas
- To maintain and promote the aims of the American Federation of Texas and other affiliated labor bodies

BENEFITS

- \$8,000,000 Occupational Liability Insurance
 - provides security while teaching
 - protection against litigation
 - malpractice protection
- \$25,000 Accidental Death Insurance
- Legal Assistance
 - Free consultation and representation on grievances and job related problems
 - Services of leading labor attorneys
 - Legal Defense Fund protection
- Political Power
 - Texas AFT lobbyists in Austin
 - AFT lobbyists in Washington
 - Representation at the Coordinating Board
 - Support for local electoral work
- Affiliations
 - Affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO
 - Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and Texas AFT
- Staff Services
 - Professional representatives to assist and advise in processing grievances
 - AFT research facilities
 - Leadership Training
- Savings and discounts on goods and services with AFT PLUS Benefits
- Free \$10,000 term life insurance policy for first year of membership

Professional career protection and a
united voice at work.
Join us today!

www.aft-lonestarcollege.org

American Federation of Teachers -Lone Star College Membership Application

AFT-Lone Star College is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Texas AFT and accepts membership from all non-supervisory employees of the LoneStar College System. Indicate below whether you are a new member or a current member wishing to update your contact information. Membership with AFT-Lone Star College provides each member with an \$8 million Professional Occupational Liability coverage policy, legal defense coverage and access to representation for work-related issues. In addition, AFT-Lone Star College members are entitled to special savings and discounts through our AFT PLUS benefits program. If you have questions about joining, please call AFT-Lone Star College President, Alan Hall @ 281-618-5544. You may also visit our website: www.aft-lonestarcollege.org

1) Fill out the application below and choose your method of payment

2) Remit this application to AFT-Lone Star College President, Alan Hall

By US mail: AFT - Lone Star College P.O. Box 788 Spring, Texas 77383-0788 **OR** Interoffice mail: Alan Hall @ A-217, North Harris



A Union of Professionals

Monthly Membership Dues rates:

Based on your position with the LoneStar College System, please select your appropriate monthly dues rate.

- ☐ Full-time Faculty \$30.30
- ☐ Adjunct Faculty \$11.00
- ☐ Full-time Professional Staff \$26.50
- ☐ Full-time Support Staff \$22.90
- ☐ Part-time Staff \$11.00



A Union of Professionals

First Name:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Middle Initial:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Last Name:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
Home Address:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>				
City:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	State:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>	Zip code:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>
Home Phone:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Email Address:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
Employee ID Number:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	College Campus:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
Position:	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Room #:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>	Referred by:	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>
Please indicate whether you are a new or current member. <input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Current member (information update only)					

Membership dues payment options: Check the method of payment that you would like to use for payment of your monthly dues.

☐ **Check or money order**
*Send first monthly payment with application.
 Make checks payable to: AFT- LSC*

☐ **Payroll Deduction**
*Fill out the portion below. You will be contacted by AFT Lone Star with
 instructions on how to authorize payroll deductions with LSCS*

Please fill out this portion if you have selected payroll deduction as your payment method.

"I have chosen Payroll deduction as my payment method for my AFT Lone Star membership dues and fees."

Signature:

Date:

Contact Phone #:

For AFT-Lone Star College office use only. Do not write in this box.

Position verified: YES NO (Initials) _____ NOTES: _____
 Dues Class: FTF AF FTPS FTSS PTS C _____



2700 W. W. Thorne Dr.
Suite A217

**We're on the
Web!**
**www.aft-
lonestarcollge.org**

CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to **Pat Gray, Editor**, NHC, ext. 5545 or e-mail: patsy.gray@lonestar.edu, or **Heather Mitchell, Assistant Editor**, CFC, ext. 3254, or e-mail: heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu or submit to any of the other following officers:

Alan Hall, President	North Harris College	ACAD 217-G	ext.5544
Velma Trammell	North Harris College	DTEC 101	ext. 5612
Bruce Machart	North Harris College	ACAD 217-A	ext. 5542
Bob Locander	North Harris College	ACAD 270	ext. 5592
Allen Vogt	North Harris College	ACAD 264-C	ext. 5583
Vivian Brecher	North Harris College	LIBR 114	ext. 5403
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood College	FTC 100-G	ext. 1656
Laura Codner	Kingwood College	SFA 113-D	ext. 1414
Catherine Olson	Tomball College	S 153 - H	ext. 3776
Richard Becker	Tomball College	E 271-D	ext. 1835
Julie Alber	Montgomery College	E 205- E	ext. 7241
Cheri Barlow	Montgomery College	C 100-C	ext. 7370
Robert McGehee	Cy-Fair College	ART 113-H	ext. 3935

Membership Has Its Benefits

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that predates membership." The individuals to whom I had to say that were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their

situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available. The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice in their professional

lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, it's there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. The AFT advocated effectively for the raise employees received this year. The annual membership dues are a small percentage of the raise. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

Alan Hall