



The Advocate

Outsourcing the College

In the 1990s, Lone Star College-Kingwood, then known as Kingwood College, undertook a significant change on a personnel issue. For a considerable time, the college had been outsourcing its custodial services to an outside contractor, and the relationship was not working well.

Custodial work is hard. I should know. I put myself through college for a period of time working as a custodian at Lazarus Department Store in Worthington, Ohio. I have vacuumed a lot of carpets and cleaned a lot of toilets. I worked for a services company to whom the store had out-

sourced their cleaning needs. The company treated me reasonably well, but out on the floor I definitely knew that I was an outsider. I remember feeling like I was invisible to the regular Lazarus employees and even more so to the customers.

So, over my whole teaching career I have always felt a special kinship with the folks who clean the buildings. This was true when I was at Kingwood, and I knew that the custodians felt that same sense of being outsiders that I had experienced at Lazarus Department Store.

(continued on p.2)

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We Show Up.
We Advocate Together.
AFT-Lone Star College**



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- ☒ If you believe employees should have a voice in the political process, you should join.
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More details on membership benefits
and how to join are on pages 7-8



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(Outsourcing continued)

Dr. Steve Head was president of Kingwood College at the time, and he made a decision to bring those services in-house. The college actually hired many, if not all, of the custodians who had been cleaning our buildings for the contractor and made them Kingwood employees.

The change in how the workers felt about their work was remarkable. They all got new uniforms with the green Kingwood College logo, and they expressed how proud they were. They were now part of the team. The most amazing thing is that the buildings were immediately noticeably cleaner and neater. The custodians had been diligent workers all along, but the buildings were now their buildings and making them shine was now a matter of personal pride.

I tell you this story because, as you know, in the 20 years that have passed since then, outsourcing has become a mainstay of American business. That has certainly been true here at Lone Star College. Over the years, several of our colleges have again outsourced cleaning services, for example. We have also outsourced the bookstore, the cafeteria, our childcare programs, and, most recently, our counseling services as well as other college functions.

Management consultants would tell us that we have done the right thing and we should do more. Outsourcing will save us money, they would say, and make us more responsive to changing market forces (i.e., make it easier to shed employees). There are colleges and universities around the country that have tinkered with outsourcing advising and enrollment management. Lone Star experimented with outsourcing technology services under the previous chancellor, with disastrous results. There are even examples popping up here and there of colleges actually outsourcing teaching to outside firms.

I don't know whether any of the outsourcing Lone Star College has initiated so far has saved us money. I believe, however, that we would all be hard pressed to demonstrate that any of these changes have resulted in better service to our students. Certainly, they have not benefitted employees.

The point I would like to make with my personal story and the story of my Kingwood colleagues is that, whether or not there are any gains from out-

sourcing various services, there are definite losses. As budgets get tighter and tighter, the Administration and Board of Trustees will certainly be tempted to turn to outsourcing again. We in the union ask them to consider carefully what it is that we can lose.

With outsourcing, we lose control over how tasks are performed. We lose quality control. We introduce security risks when employees—that we have not vetted—access facilities. We experience more turnover and less consistency as contractors move their employees around frequently and the employees move on for better pay and benefits. However, what we lose most of all is the enthusiasm of workers who will go above and beyond the call of duty because they have their shirt with the college logo on it and they know they belong here.

John Burghdoff

AFT-Lone Star College VP for Faculty at CyFair
Professor of Math, LSC-CyFair

AFT Lone Star College

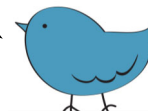


A Union of Professionals

Editor's note: Erratum

In the August-October 2019 issue of The Advocate, a mistake was made in preparing the article "If You See Something, Say Something." The author references a student who claimed to have a home arsenal of at least 40 weapons. We erroneously printed that number as 60.

We apologize for this mistake.





Is the AFT “Too Negative?”

Is the AFT “too negative?” This question is a valid one and deserves some reflection. Currently, the LSC Board does not recognize the AFT as a legitimate voice for Lone Star employees, but during board meetings, the community can offer comments within strict limits. Because of this, the AFT applies for this public comment time at each Board meeting and is granted a five-minute slot (a count-down clock is placed in front of the speaker with a green light, then a caution light as time is about to expire, and finally a red light when the speaker’s time is up).

At a recent Board meeting (May, 2019), John Burghduff spoke in this timeslot to present data that the pay rate for adjunct faculty at LSC has dropped several places since last year, and to propose not that the Board raise adjunct pay rates to match the cost of living, but at least to raise them enough to bring LSC back to its ranking of the previous year among state community colleges.

Clearly, bringing these facts before the Board and laying out the case for a fair pay increase for adjuncts could have been heard as negative by those present. Most items on the meeting’s agenda recognized various achievements and positive data of which the System rightly can be proud. But the question lingers regarding that five-minute message by Burghduff: *“Is the AFT too negative?”*

In the August-October 2019 issue of *The Advocate*, the Board of Trustees was praised for giving adjunct faculty a raise amounting to “a more meaningful, living wage [...] and to give all other employees a 3% raise—the largest in several years—in spite of cuts in state investment in the college” (9).

Was the raise a response to Burghduff’s words in May? That is not the point. Rather, we should ask this question: *Why would we hear a perspective regarding some area of our institutional life where we can do better, and then brand those words as “too negative?”*

Currently, all employees are completing mandatory online training which covers important areas, such as identifying harassment and sexual abuse, or understanding HIV and AIDS. We are not able to opt-out of this training, and although everyone is busy, most would not want to. Certainly we would not call this training “negative,” or feel that we personally are suspected of any professional lapses in judgment or decorum. Rather, we participate and invariably end up learning something important about how to conduct ourselves both at work and in our individual lives.

For example, in the SafeCollege training, we are reminded of the wisdom of definitions like these:

“Tolerance and respect are not the same. When you tolerate someone, you simply ‘put up’ with him or her. The other person usually picks up on that. You might be professional during a conversation with a person you tolerate, while thinking negative or derogatory thoughts about him or her.”

“Respect is celebrating differences and feeling excited about the opportunity to hear another person’s point of view.”

“Respect is celebrating differences and feeling excited about the opportunity to hear another person’s point of view. When you respect others, you help build an environment free from discrimination.”

The AFT appreciates and loves Lone Star College—we support 100% the college’s core mission in the community. After all, this is the work and the place that many of us have given big pieces—sometimes multiple decades—of our lives to. Showing how the college system can do better does not undermine that love—it demonstrates it.

Michael McFarland, LSC Professor Emeritus





Joe Bontke was a close friend to and strong supporter of our union. He was the Houston area outreach coordinator and ombudsman for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The *Houston Chronicle* Life Tributes section noted that Joe “fought for equal rights for the disabled, equal pay for women, immigrant rights, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, race equity, LGBTQ rights, and civility for all. Joe was a civil rights advocate and gifted speaker.”

Joe spent a good deal of his time educating management on civil rights in the workplace. He traveled to many of LSC’s colleges giving presentations on employee rights. Curiously, he once came to LSC-North Harris to speak during the Richard Carpenter regime. I had reserved a room and the next day was told by the administration that the union could not use the room. Joe came to North Harris anyway and stood outside the canceled room. He brought along Richard Shaw, at the time Secretary-Treasurer of the Harris County AFL-CIO, and Wooty Sixel, a reporter for the *Houston Chronicle*. Sixel ran a story on page one of the business section above the fold, and that *Chronicle* story created quite a stir. The irony was not lost on anyone that a guest speaker from the EEOC had come to the college to explain civil rights in the workplace and was denied his civil rights. The next day, I received a communication from an administrator pleading with the AFT to have a meeting on campus in that room. Apparently, the administration had received a good deal of flak over such a brazen violation of free speech, a civil right.

I always admired Joe Bontke, but on that day he became a hero of mine.

We will miss you, Joe.

Alan Hall



Joe Bontke
1957 - 2019

Tales from the Unionside

After reading Steven Greenhouse’s *Broken Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present and Future of American Labor* recently, I began to look back on the forty-year history of the AFT at Lone Star College. From the days of W.W. Thorne to Steve Head, the union’s experience has been a hot and cold war situation, pitting the union and its fight for faculty, staff, and student rights and interests against some administrators and trustees with a different agenda focused on building campuses and personal resumes.

The big war between the AFT and the administration occurred during the Bill Thorne era of the early 1980’s. President Thorne did everything within his power to kill the union. Once he learned of the AFT’s formation at North Harris County College, his handpicked board allies passed an anti-union resolution. The Board of Trustees then authorized college funds to fly in a labor consultant from Florida, Kenneth Winters, to train administrators on union-busting techniques. To let all employees know that a union would be “bad” for them, Mr. Thorne composed a long letter laying out his anti-union beliefs that was attached to all employee contracts and mailed to our homes.

During the Thorne days, what kept the AFT afloat was the relationship we had with the national AFT



organization, the Harris County AFL-CIO council, and a few Democratic Party state legislators who talked with Thorne about what was going on at NHCC. As a noose was tightening around the union's neck, the AFT filed a federal lawsuit on our behalf against the college president and the board. The AFT lawsuit was heard by a Texas Federal District Court and the U. S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. These courts did reject the union's claim of First and Fourteenth Amendment rights violations against NHCC instructors by college officials. Although judges rejected our claims over speech and meeting rights, these issues became moot once Thorne left North Harris to take a position as the first head of the Harris County Toll Road Authority. After anti-union Bill became Toll Road Willie, management-labor relations entered an era of détente under Chancellors Joe Airola and John Pickelman. The administration and the union often worked together in areas of mutual interest from legislation in Austin to bond elections in the community to grievance matters on campuses.

This era of détente came to an end during the tenure of Chancellor Richard Carpenter as the "bad" old days of Thorne returned. While W.W.'s style was personal and autocratic, Carpenter ushered in a period of friendly fascism more in tune with the worst of corporate America.

The transplanted Las Vegas college head came to Texas and showed a willingness to create and foster an environment of fear, intimidation, and firings. Under Carpenter's watch, the Montgomery College massacre took place when MC President Austin Lane fired the faculty senate president, reassigned unilaterally one professor to North Harris, and allowed another professor to remain shell-shocked in his office over a dispute with a college vice-president.

By chance, Larry Loomis-Price, the transferred professor, came up to me at Starbucks one recent Saturday morning. He saw me wearing a Lone Star College shirt, and it took a while for us to connect as we had only met briefly, one or two times, years ago. Loomis-Price is now at the University of Houston-

Downtown. We reminisced about Gordon Carruth, Mark Stelter, and his Montgomery ordeal. Both Gordon and Larry filed lawsuits against Lone Star College which were settled in their favor. While a non-disclosure agreement applied in Carruth's settlement, Loomis-Price got a six-figure amount from LSC, and he thanked the AFT for its help. What sticks with the former Lone Star professor were President Lane's words that there is "no free speech" at Montgomery College. While Lane is gone, let's hope that free speech today is not gone—at any of the campuses.

Having dealt with two autocratic chancellors out of four, the AFT had high hopes that Dr. Steve Head would turn out to be a Pickelman and not a Thorne. While the Head administration is still in place, some of the chancellor's actions are too Thornish for the union's comfort. With a Ph.D. in history, Steve should be familiar with the good and bad chapters of

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labor history. He has been around long enough to know the many positive contributions made by the AFT and its leaders to Lone Star College. Following the Carpenter disaster, Head began his chancellorship on a high note. His first Conference Day address to faculty and staff members was the best speech I have ever heard him give. It was all Gerald Ford "good" guy, letting the employees know that Richard "Nixon" Carpenter was no longer in office. This

speech marked the beginning of a honeymoon period between the administration and the union that lasted a year or so before the relationship began to change for the worse.

Recognizing the valuable work of President Alan Hall and the union to LSC, Chancellor Head initially agreed to meet regularly with AFT leaders and members. As unpleasant facts and union requests were introduced at meetings, Steve Head's schedule became too crowded to meet regularly with the AFT. When articles in *The Advocate* hit some sensitive administration nerves, a few trustees suggested that the union act more like the faculty senates, which only brought positive suggestions and praise to LSC management. Our reaction was immediate in telling trustees that faculty senates are company unions



whose role is different from the role of the AFT, which represents members' interests and rights without fear.

Over the past several years, in fact, time and experience have caused the AFT to have little confidence in Head's willingness to cooperate with the union. In fact, he has become more and more anti-union and has taken actions that can only be described as attempts at union busting. For instance, he once met regularly with the union but suddenly broke off communication with us. Regular meetings were cancelled, and he would not respond to our efforts to communicate with him.

After this anti-union move, Chancellor Head decided to end an arrangement with the AFT dating back to the Pickelman administration. This arrangement allowed the union to pay the cost for two adjunct professors each semester to allow AFT President Alan Hall to have a reduced teaching load, permitting him to handle the many employee requests for information and assistance. First proposed years ago by administrators, the practice was ended 3 years ago without any discussion or reason given other than it was Head's call, and we understood the message behind the call.

As the AFT-LSC looks to the future, there are reasons to be hopeful for better days ahead. We have had periods of being frozen out by labor-hating college leaders before and continued to persevere in times of adversity. What has helped our cause is the emergence of fresh faces and new approaches to advance the union's goals. I have no doubt that we are at the beginning of such an emergence within the AFT at Lone Star.

From the management standpoint, Chancellor Steve Head's long career in education is winding down. His relationship with the board of trustees has undergone a big change in recent years. The current board is a unique blend of individuals with

differing points of view on the union, the administration, and the college system. In looking at the board, I would characterize three trustees as "Headers" who will only listen to the chancellor's voice. Three trustees regard Steve Head as someone not to be trusted as his voice drifts in and out too much for their liking. The other three board members are on the fence regarding the chancellor and his leadership. This 3-3-3 board mix probably puts LSC in a good place as the board is not a

closed chamber to voices outside of the system office. As we are a public academic institution, all LSC and community voices should be heard and considered in the decision-making process. This has been the case in some time periods in the past and needs to be the case again in the future.

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Bob Locander
Professor of Political Science, LSC-North Harris

Editor's Note:

Locander is a regular political columnist for The Advocate.

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AFT-Lone Star College

AFT Local Union # 4518

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

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Full-time Professional Staff	\$31.25
Full-time Support Staff	\$28.53
Adjunct Faculty	\$16.57
Part-time Staff	\$16.57

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Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full-time 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 the back of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at:

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1. Go to <https://join.aft.org>. From the pull-down menu in the box under "FIND A LOCAL," choose "Texas." Click "search" and then scroll down to find "AFT Lone Star College, Local 4518."
2. Fill out your information in the boxes.
3. You're then asked to identify your membership category: Full-time faculty, Full-time professional staff, etc.
4. You're then asked to provide your bank name, routing number and account number, check boxes authorizing the semi-monthly deductions for dues, and type your name. Then, press "SUBMIT." YOU'RE DONE! (in minutes!)

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There is a section of the application that must be filled out by an officer of AFT– Lone Star College, so please fill out the application and contact us ASAP so we can arrange to fill it out in person.

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Eligibility: Members or children of members of local unions or children whose legal guardians are members of local unions that are affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO and the local Central Labor Council. Applicants must be high school seniors who are planning to attend a university, college or technical institute in the summer or fall term.

Scholarship Award Amounts: Scholarships are one-time grants of \$1,500.

For more information, go to:

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Scholarship Award Amounts: Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2020. Students may re-apply each year.

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AFT Lone Star College



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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 ideas. Send your articles to **Katie Hurter, Editor** via e-mail: k.hurter@icloud.com, or submit to any of the following officers.

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Dr. Stephen Washington	Victory Center	Faculty Office	832-810-5612
Dr. Adrienne Patton	Fairbanks Center	Faculty Office	832-782-5086

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 pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to give this message 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, AFT is there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

—Alan Hall

