



The Advocate

We're Baaaaack!!!

Picture it: Early March, 2020. Approaching Midterm. Everyone thinking about warmer weather and Spring Break. Vague concerns about some sort of flu like disease currently showing up in China, Italy and on random cruise ships. Maybe wash our hands a bit more often just in case. The calm before the impending storm of a lifetime.

As all of this was going on, we in the AFT were preparing the first issue of our newsletter *The Advocate* for Spring Semester. Articles had been written. Print had been typeset. Proofs had been sent to our printer. Hard copies had just arrived. A few of them even got delivered on some campuses right before Spring Break. The rest were sitting in boxes in various employees' office ready to be distributed as soon as we all got back. And there they sat because there was no coming back.

We're not totally sure what became of all the copies of the January - March 2020 issue of *The Advocate*. The copies at the CyFair campus faced an ignominious demise. After sitting in an office for 11 months, a pipe broke overhead during the Great Freeze of February, 2021 soaking the almost 1000 copies intended for the CyFair campus, Cypress Center and Westway Center leaving a great soggy mess that had to be thrown out.

As we all hunkered down over the Long Spring Break of 2020, AFT officers did what everyone else did. Those of us on the faculty spent night and day converting classes from face to face to online. Those of us with

staff positions worked to find a way to run offices that no one could enter. All of us scoured the eight-county area for hand sanitizer and toilet paper.

With all of that going on, *The Advocate* took a back seat to more pressing emergencies and thus began the first break in publication of the AFT - Lone Star College newsletter since its inaugural issue in 1979. (The local actually chartered in 1980.)

Once again, the weather is warming. A second Spring Break has come and gone. (Wait! Did we have a Spring Break?) And just like the plants in our gardens that are finally showing signs of life after the Snowpocalypse of 21, it is time for The AFT - Lone Star College newsletter to return to life, too.

Welcome to the first edition of the newly resurrected union newsletter *The Advocate*!

Much of what you see looks just like before but, like everything else, you are reading it online. Starting with this issue we will be returning to our regular publication schedule of two issues each long semester. At least through Fall, 2021 we will be coming to you through your computer inbox instead of your office mailbox. After that, we'll see. We may return to print. We may stay online. We may adopt a hybrid format. Times change (sometimes abruptly) and we are changing, too.

What will not change is our commit-

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ment to providing the Lone Star College Community with important news and quality insight into the life of our Institution. We will keep you abreast of the work that the AFT is doing (and has been doing all through pandemic) to advocate for Policy and to advocate for People – because the name of our newsletter is what we do!

Read on, dear friends. We are back!

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



AFT-Lone Star 2020 A Year in Review



AFT-Lone Star has been busy this past year!

As 2020 is behind us, we're taking a moment to review all the good work our union has done at Lone Star College to improve college life for both employees and students.

Issue advocacy for employees:

- At the beginning of COVID-19, we were concerned about LSC employees and we set out to check on as many employees as we could via wellness calls. We sent out a survey in August 2020 to gather information about how employees were feeling and coping under these circumstances. We then presented our survey results to the LSC Board of Trustees in September, encouraging LSC to maintain transparent, accurate and regular reporting to LSC employees regarding COVID cases at each campus.
- We formed an AFT Health & Safety Committee in September 2020 to help us to identify issues at the campuses, and work on solutions.
- We have attended all LSC Trustee meetings to continue advocating on behalf of employees on these, and other issues.
- We assisted a number of employees in negotiating ADA accommodations to help keep them safe during the pandemic.

Accomplishments and other activities:

- AFT-Lone Star just celebrated its 41st Birthday! Founded in 1980 AFT Lone started with about 20 employees and was first led by Kevin Bailey, who left LSC to serve in the Texas House of Representatives.
- Alan Hall, President of AFT-Lone Star with 35 years of service to our union, stepped aside this last union election cycle to create a space for new union leadership. Alan Hall took the helm as President of our union in 1985 after Kevin Bailey. Alan is now serving as the AFT Lone Star Secretary.
- In November 2020 John Burghdoff, Math Professor at the CyFair campus, was elected as our third AFT Lone Star President. We also gained several other elected officers to help expand our representation at all the campuses.
- Our part-time organizers Mrs. Daler Wade & Ms. Karina Nistal have been instrumental with organizing efforts, visibility, membership recruitment, and member assistance, especially during the pandemic. The new members that have joined this school year represent 11% of our total membership.

Contributions to student success:

- Four years ago, AFT-Lone Star established an endowed scholarship for Lone Star College students. The scholarship provides \$1000 per year to an awarded student.
- Our union has engaged administration in dialogue about the future of online classes to ensure that students are well served in this format and that academic freedom is preserved for faculty

Solving individual members' issues:

Over the course of 2020, we have helped 40+ members with individual employment concerns ranging from:

Pay/benefits	Termination
ADA/Covid issues	Reassignment
Workplace bullying	Harassment

AFT-Lone Star attorney, Chris Tritico, has been instrumental in helping our members over employee issues.



Joining AFT-Lone Star is the best thing you can do to ensure that you have a voice on work-related issues that matter to you!

Whether you have been at LSC for a long time or are just beginning your career, joining AFT-Lone Star is the best way to ensure your voice at work on issues that matter to you.

Our Union has a solid history of going to bat for our members when they need help and speaking up on issues that concern our members system-wide.

- ☐ If you believe faculty and staff should have a voice in educational issues, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe employees should have a voice in the political process, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe in the value of employees advocating for each other, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe employees should be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect, you should join.

Your dues help support these values.

Membership should not be thought of as only for "protection," but if you need help in a conflict, we will be there for you.

Don't join because you think you might get into trouble; join because you embrace the values we embrace.

[Click here to Join AFT Lone Star TODAY!](http://join.aft.org)

<http://join.aft.org>

Select "Texas" and hit "Search".

Then select "AFT-Lone Star College, Local 4518"

Join Today!



A Union of Professionals

AFT-Lone Star College

A union of Professionals

- \$8 million in professional occupational liability insurance (in case you get sued)
- Local staff and leaders ready to assist you when you need help and information
- Legal defense funds (in case you need an attorney)
- \$25,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy
- Strong leaders and lobbyists advocating for your rights at the local, state, and national levels
- \$5,000 free term life insurance for your 1st year of membership
- AFT PLUS savings and discounts for you and your family
- Educational resources and publications
- No conflict of interest– Administrators cannot join
- Strong. Active. Vocal. When you join AFT-Lone Star, you join the best!
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A Message from John Burghduff, President of AFT – Lone Star College

I still have my first membership card for the American Federation of Teachers local 4518 serving what was then known as the North Harris Montgomery Community College District. It is printed on simple cardstock with my name and membership number typed in on an ordinary typewriter. It is dated 1993, a few months after I was hired to teach at Kingwood College and it is hand signed by the president of the local, Alan Hall.

I had first learned about the AFT in 1982 when I was hired for my previous teaching position at San Jacinto College. I was impressed with the AFT local there for their dogged determination to stand up for the rights of employees in the face of a legendary autocratic chancellor by the name of Tom Spencer. Sadly, that local fizzled out, its leaders cynically promoted to administrative positions and then muzzled in the name of complying with the chain of command.

By the time I came to Kingwood, the local that would eventually be named AFT – Lone Star College had been existence for about 13 years. The local had begun as a tiny band of faculty at North Harris County College and had its own baptism of fire standing up to another autocratic administration lead by the legendary W.W. Thorne. Unlike the local at San Jacinto, this tiny band never lost sight of their purpose and persevered. Although, by the time I was hired, life had improved dramatically for employees under Chancellor John Pickelman, I knew from direct observation that progress can be fragile, requiring constant vigilance on the part of faculty and staff. I also quickly learned that much of what made NHMCCD a positive atmosphere for employees and students was due to the tireless work of local 4518. I knew that this was an organization I wanted to belong to and I joined.

Chancellors have come and gone in our system. The college changed its name twice. The union remains. Some of those original members are still with us: wise elder statespersons.

Through most of our 41-year history, a good 35 of them, there has been one constant and steady force that has kept us on course and guided our growth to

nearly 500 members. That force is our president, Alan Hall. Alan has been the face of our union. He has skillfully guided countless members through sticky spots with supervisors. He has negotiated wisely with college leaders to craft policies and procedures that protect employee rights (faculty and staff) and to promote a level of shared governance that is unheard of at many community colleges. This work has taken great personal sacrifice on his part. Of course, there is a great deal of time involved but, throughout our history, there have been powerful forces that have resented being questioned. His life has not been easy, but he has persisted and prevailed.

Alan has also mentored countless leaders, men and women who previously had only thought of themselves as dedicated teachers, librarians, counselors, facilities workers, secretaries and the like, but who now also see themselves as servants and advocates for their colleagues.

One of those people is me.

For quite a few years, I was a loyal rank and file member of local 4518, totally dedicated to its values and beliefs but not imagining that I could actually do something to make it stronger. At some point, Alan recognized that I could write fairly decently and that I had a lot of issues I was passionate about and he encouraged me to write some articles for The Advocate. At some point, after I moved from Kingwood to CyFair and after the previous vice president for faculty on our campus tragically passed away, Alan asked me if I would take on that role. To say that I was terrified is an understatement. However, Alan spent innumerable hours with me on the phone and in person teaching me how to run a grievance, how to recruit new members, how to run a union meeting and how to organize. This is time for which I am eternally grateful and I now consider my patient mentor to be one of my dearest friends.

Nine years ago, Alan and Bob Locander asked me to be the spokesperson for our local to the Board of Trustees. I can tell you when I gave my first speech to the Board of Trustees that my heart was pounding. Richard Carpenter, who had become chancellor by this time, glared at me with suspicion the whole time. However, I have gained confidence over the years and I am privileged to be able to ex-



press the concerns of Lone Star employees before the System Administration and the Board. Our voices are being heard. Due process rights have been improved. Civil rights guarantees for both employees and students have been strengthened. Decisions about curricular issues have been influenced to the betterment of the teaching process. Now Board members come to the union for our opinions on critical issues and our efforts are not infrequently covered in the local press.

So now our local finds itself at a pivotal moment. Alan Hall, after many years of extraordinary service

to us all, has decided to step down from his role as president as he contemplates a well-deserved retirement from Lone Star College at some point in the future. He is not leaving AFT. In fact, he will be taking on a new role as secretary to support us and encourage us as we all learn to fly on our own. He told me about this plan about two years ago and asked me to consider running to be his replacement when the time would come and I have quietly been serving as an understudy since then. Alan and I have talked weekly, and sometimes daily, about the needs of our local and I have been privileged to participate in several training events sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers at the national level and Texas AFT at the state level. I have worked closely with our general counsel, Chris Tritico, and have gotten to know the leaders of other AFT locals with whom we often partner.

The time has now come and it is with incalculable gratitude for everything that Alan Hall has done for our local, for Lone Star College in general and for me in particular and with great humility before the solemn task that lies before me that I accept the position as the next president of AFT – Lone Star College, local 4518. I pledge to you all that the values for which this local has stood for 41 years will continue to be its values. I pledge to you all that this local's commitment to advocate for policy and to advocate for people will continue on unabated. I pledge to you that we will not lose sight of the reality that our students are best served when our faculty

and staff feel secure in their roles and empowered to act.

A union presidency is a role that no person can do alone. I am grateful for the support and solidarity of the outstanding members of our executive board listed elsewhere in this mailing. I am grateful for the hard work and insight of our faithful organizers Kat Kupelian, Daler Wade, Karina Nistal and Richard Shaw.

Also, I am grateful for all of you, the faithful rank and file employees of Lone Star College. Your union needs you. I need you. I need your well wishes. I need your prayers. I need your support. You are our eyes and ears to be aware of problems and challenges within our college that we need to address. You are our mouths to let your colleagues know what the union has to offer and to invite them to stand with us. You are our feet and hands when our colleagues need help and when we need to make a public show of solidarity.

**Alan Hall has
mentored
countless leaders.
One of those
people is me.**

Finally, you are our future. It is not likely that I will serve as your president for as long as Alan has. I will try, but I will be into my 90s after that many years. So my top priority as AFT president must be to nurture a new generation of leaders, union members open to travelling a similar path to the one I have travelled. We need union leaders who look like Lone Star College, a diverse mix of persons of all races, ethnicities, cultures, ages, religions, genders, sexual orientations, political parties and points of view. You don't have to be president tomorrow. We can help you find a role that suits your personal talents and current comfort level and we can help you grow into whatever role you feel called to fulfill. Call or email me. Talk to one of our organizers or an executive board member on your campus. With your help, we can double our membership and set the foundation for the next 40 years of local 4518.

Although I know many of you already, I look forward to meeting as many of you as I possibly can as we plan for the future. Once this dreadful pandemic is over, we are planning a huge party to celebrate



(belatedly) the 40th anniversary of our local and to properly thank Alan Hall for the amazing work he has done for all of us for so many years. I wish I could tell you exactly when that will happen but stay tuned. It will be epic, I promise you.

Until then, you'll be hearing from me, I promise! May God bless you all and may God bless AFT – Lone Star College.



John Burghduff, President—AFT Lone Star College

AFT Lone Star College



A Union of Professionals

A Message from Alan Hall

I started my career at North Harris County College in 1974. I was right out of graduate school and started teaching English at \$9,000 annually, a princely sum compared to graduate school. Once things settled down, I began to see that the college administration saw things differently than I did.

I grew up in a union family. My father, J.D. Hall, was a steelworker, and my mother, Virginia Hall, was a CWA member who worked as a telephone operator. I sat at the dinner table listening to them talk about the union work they had done to help others and protect employee rights. Apparently, I was listening more than I realized, because here I am.

I was involved in the college's first review by the Southern Association. I was assigned to work on faculty compensation with two other faculty members. Our report was not well received by the college President. I remember my department chair pulling me aside and asking me if I had data to support what the report said: faculty were significantly underpaid. I assured the chair that I did have the data.

A few days later, the three members of our committee were called to the President's office. He was not happy and questioned what would people think of our report. I responded that they likely would think faculty were underpaid. The President insisted that we rewrite the report and made it clear that the meeting was over.

Our committee did more research as required and turned in documentation showing that faculty actually were worse off than even the committee had realized. The President had little to say to me after that.

Interactions with the administration were contentious, but in the early eighties, something happened. Bob Locander, now Professor of Political Science, dropped by my office and said that he had heard I might be interested in helping start a union. He had come to the right place. Kevin Bailey, also Professor of Political Science and the one who sent Bob my way, was the first union president at North Harris County College. A couple of years later, about 1984, Kevin ran for a seat in the state legislature and won. I suddenly was union president, and I have



served from 1983 to December 2020---36 years.

In those 36 years, the AFT has grown dramatically. We have represented hundreds of employees. We have fought for their rights. There are many employees who would not be working at LSC had they not joined the union.

We have an excellent executive board with officers spread out across the LSC system. As we built our union, I met John Burghduff, Professor of Mathematics at CyFair College. I knew right away that he would be a great asset to our cause, and he has been engaged with AFT ever since. I am grateful for John and his hard work.

I have had a great run, and it is time to bring along younger folks to our union. I did not run for president in our recent election. I encouraged John to run, and he is now AFT President. I ran for the Secretary position and plan to be around for a while. It has been an honor to have been supported by my family, my colleagues, and our organizers.

“I have had a great run, and it is time to bring along younger folks to our union.”

Alan

Covid 19 and Lone Star College

No one thought to write a manual about how to run a college in the midst of a pandemic.

When the realization of how bad Covid19 was going to be hit us in March, 2020, all of us at Lone Star College and around the world went into 100% battle mode to find a way to continue to teach our students as successfully and safely as possible. The road has been bumpy, the results have not been perfect, and the battle is far from over even though we can begin to see a glimmer of dawn in the darkness.

It is certainly premature to schedule a victory parade but there have been some remarkable things that have taken place at Lone Star College and it is worthwhile to take a minute to reflect on the contributions made by faculty, staff, students, and administration over the past year. Here's a few points with kudos to many.

- The reality of the pandemic and the Great Shut Down hit over Spring Break, 2020. Although most colleges vowed to reopen on time or, perhaps with a week's delay, Dr. Steve Head, Chancellor, and his cabinet, together with the Board of Trustees decided to keep Lone Star College closed for more than a month to give faculty and staff a reasonable opportunity to prepare.
- Lone Star faculty, both full time and adjunct, completed the monumental task of turning the entire college online. Many of those faculty had never taught online in their lives. One colleague remarked that he didn't even know where D2L lived. However, we all pulled together and helped each other. Soon we were all doing things we never dreamed we would be doing – mastering Webex, learning how to create and curate learning materials for online, figuring out how to keep students engaged. We did it! And we continue to learn more and improve on our classes.
- Our students stuck with us, even in the midst of chaos, lost jobs, kids stuck at home, and personal battles with Covid. Amazingly, our drop rates were lower and our success rates higher than in previous years.
- Our staff figured out how to run offices that they couldn't set foot in. Many took on duties they had never trained for as some departments were overwhelmed with extra work while others saw their work dry up. Librarians became advisors. Interpreters became Covid tracers. Division staff became front line medical check-in staff.
- AFT – Lone Star College assisted in excess of 40 employees in navigating challenges they have faced at work including staying safe in spite of Covid risk factors, managing family obligations, and responding to failures in safety protocols.
- To a very large degree, administrators resisted



the temptation to micromanage faculty and staff. They focused on providing resources and support rather than burdening employees with excessive rules and protocols that would have burnt people out.

- When fall semester began, many colleges opened way too fast and became massive super-spreader sites. The Lone Star College Board and Administration elected to stay safe and largely online. As a result, although we have experienced serious illnesses and tragic deaths in our college community, we have done much better than most. They have also insisted on strict safety protocols in spite of the ridiculous politicization of life saving measures like masks and social distancing that has been seen in too many places.
- Dr. Head made a commitment to us all that no full-time employee would be laid off or furloughed. Although adjusting to new ways of working has been extremely painful for many, at least we are still working. Part time employees, sadly, have seen cuts in hours even as their families have needed a stable income more than ever.

Has everyone agreed with all of the decisions that have been made? No. Some believe we are returning to normal too slowly. Others worry that we are going too fast. When we look at other colleges that have had widespread outbreaks, multiple shut-downs and restarts, knee-jerk swings in policies and procedures, serious drops in enrollment, employee layoffs, and pay cuts, we have to conclude that Lone Star has chosen the right overall path.

Have there been challenges and concerns? Yes. Many of them have been isolated. Many of them have been fixed. All of them are still fixable.

- Some departments have tried to skirt Covid protocols by bringing a larger percentage of employees on site than allowed, holding face to face meetings in cramped quarters, and being lax on mask mandates. The AFT has reported incidents like these on behalf of employees who wanted to stay anonymous and, much to their credit, top administrators have stepped in quickly to address the problems.
- As some departments have become busier during the pandemic and others less so, staff have

been asked to take on new duties to help out. Sometimes those duties are well outside of employees' areas of expertise and training has not always been consistent. This problem is fixable if employees make their need for help known and managers are supportive and understanding of those needs.

- AFT – Lone Star College has helped a number of employees with concerns about coming back to work because of serious health concerns. We have helped them seek ADA accommodations. We've been surprised in a few cases that the college has not gone as far in granting accommodations as some medical conditions would seem to warrant. On the other hand, some employees have not consistently gotten the accommodations that were approved for them. We hope those employees are doing OK but, if they are not, we hope they will reach out to us again and that the college would be willing to give these cases a second look.
- Presidents at some of our campuses have been diligent about providing reports of Covid infection and illness among student and employees. Reporting has been less consistent on other campuses. Efforts by Union members to contact chief administrators about this issue have often been successful and reporting is improving.
- On the faculty side, for the most part, deans, vice presidents of instruction, and other administrators have been extraordinarily supportive of faculty. Most of us became online teachers overnight and will return to a physical classroom when this is all over. Our classes may not have as many bells and whistles as those of us who have more experience, but they contain good information and faculty are determined to help our students. Compared to other colleges, Lone Star administrators have been encouraging and tolerant and have provided lots of valuable resources to help us get to an "as good as possible" standard. However, one or two have been intolerant of and punitive towards faculty who were having a bit more trouble adapting. We are losing extraordinary faculty just because they are not best suited for the current temporary environment.

The next few months look like a race between the vaccines and the variants.



The vaccination program in the United States gets better by the day but, at the same time, new variants of the Covid19 virus are spreading rapidly as safety precautions are being set aside prematurely. Will the pandemic be largely under control by August or will we be in the midst of a new surge of vaccine resistant Coronavirus strains? How will that scenario impact Lone Star College?

In the Union's judgment, Dr. Head has made the right decision in keeping the proportion of online versus face to face classes this fall the same as it has been this semester. If things aren't going well, we won't have to do another rapid about face to go online again. If things are going well, it won't really hurt to be mostly online for one more semester.

The Union was supportive of an earlier decision to postpone until the end of summer any decisions about bringing staff on campus more days a week. An April 19 email from Dr. Head indicates that discussions are underway to possibly speed that process up. We are glad that the same email indicates that staff will be surveyed about possible changes. We encourage staff to reply to those surveys and trust that the results will be taken seriously. Although summer may seem like a long way off, many arrangements (childcare, for example) must be planned far in advance and there could be major disruptions for some employees.

Although all of us are looking forward to more normal operations, the course of the pandemic is far from settled. We hope that Lone Star Administration, as they have promised, will pay close attention to guidance from the CDC, as well as local sources such as the Texas Medical Center and the offices of city and county officials. Never has it been more true that it is better to be safe than sorry. In the meantime, we urge supervisors not to jump the gun by bringing employees on campus more days per week now as some, unfortunately, are doing.

Over the summer, we encourage serious thought and dialog about job functions that can be completed equally well remotely versus those that truly require an on-campus presence. We have already

learned that far more can be done from home and over Webex than any of us had ever imagined. Having people on site just for the sake of having them on site is not necessarily the best strategy, especially if the pandemic is not going well in August.

We end this article the same way we started it: No one thought to write a manual about how to run a college in the midst of a pandemic. Every institution of higher education around the world has had to feel its way along as best they could. As we're getting far enough through the process to take stock, it is very clear that Lone Star College has done well overall, so far. There have been some missteps to be sure, and some of them have impacted employees badly, but we can learn from those and make some corrections.

One day we will get past all of this. In the meantime, let us all do everything we can to help get us there as soon as we can. Get your vaccine as soon as possible. Continue to wear a mask. Practice social distancing. Care for each other.

Tribute to Bob Locander

Bob Locander is a friend of mine.
Alan Hall

In 1974, I walked off the stage at Sam Houston State with a Masters and joined North Harris County College teaching English. After attending University of New Mexico and Lamar University, Bob, PhD in hand, joined the college in 1977 teaching Political Science. We have worked together for forty-four years.

In an article I recently wrote for *The Advocate*, I mentioned that Bob and Kevin Bailey, another political scientist, were interested in starting a union at the college. Kevin asked Bob to chat with me to see if I was interested. My reaction was that Bob had come to the right place. I realized quickly that we have many of the same values.

"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'" C.S. Lewis

What I admire most about Bob is his quiet strength.



I have seen him step into a conflict to gently help calm a situation down. He is cooperative and willing to work with administrators that may find his union values a problem. He does not fit a mold. He is not thin skinned, he does not let ego get in the way of compromise, he is politically savvy, and he is an excellent mediator.

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves." Lao Tzu

I have seen Bob be treated less than one might prefer in some of the conflicts that he defused while assisting AFT members. An administrator might make a derogatory comment about where he stands, and Bob simply smiled and stayed calm. He can be firm, but many administrative folks agree that he is fair. He comes across as unflappable. He does not suffer from insecurity. When he speaks, he speaks to self-confidence with an egalitarian demeanor. These qualities have been of great value to AFT Lone Star College and its employees.

Bob is a true leader. He is a rock.

"A leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, where upon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind." Nelson Mandela

I am deeply proud and grateful that he is a friend of mine.

Editor's Note: Dr. Robert Locander retired from Lone Star College in March but remains a valued member and active supporter of AFT – Lone Star College.

Did You Know?

From the inception of our local in 1979 through 1983, the name of our newsletter kept changing from *The Reporter* to *The Knight*. The name *The Advocate* was settled on in 1984 and thus it has been called ever since. In the meantime, the name of our College evolved, too, from North Harris County College to North-Harris Montgomery Community College District to Lone Star College. It's interesting to read how the College, the Union, and the issues and challenges we have faced together have evolved over 42 years.

Introducing New Members of the AFT – LSC Executive Board



AFT – Lone Star College proudly welcomes the following new members of our Executive Board who have taken on the following roles since January. We are grateful for their commitment to our local, to our college, and to all of the colleagues who they serve at their campus or site:

- Pat Chandler, Vice President for Staff, LSC – Kingwood
- Britney Hall, Vice President for Staff, LSC – University Park and System Office – UP
- Tracy Hammons, Vice President for Staff, LSC—System Office – The Woodlands
- Martha Neely, Vice President for Staff, LSC – Montgomery
- Adrienne Patton, Vice President for Faculty, LSC – CyFair
- Van Piercy, Vice President for Faculty, LSC – Tomball
- Debbie Stamper, Vice President for Staff, LSC – Tomball



Please join us in congratulating these new members of the Executive Board. A complete list of all AFT – Lone Star College Executive Board members can be found on the final page of The Advocate. Please reach out to us! We are here to help.



Lone Star College District Voters Elect New Board Members

In November, 2020, in addition to the President, the Senator and many state and local officials, citizens of the Lone Star College District voted to elect two new members of the Board of Trustees.

AFT – Lone Star College wishes to thank outgoing Board members Alton Smith and Ken Lloyd for their years of service to our college. Dr. Smith and Mr. Lloyd helped to lead us through the two biggest challenges Lone Star College has faced in its history – Hurricane Harvey and Covid-19. Their dedication to the mission of our college helped us through both of these crises and all of the smaller challenges we have faced over these last six years. We will miss them greatly and the union wishes them all the best in all their future endeavors.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome newly elected Trustees Iesheia Ayers-Wilson and Jim Cain and returning Trustee Art Murillo. They, together with the continuing members of the Board, have taken on an awesome responsibility. According to the Lone Star College policy manual, it is the Trustees who are ultimately accountable to the community we serve for the College's performance and welfare. Our taxpayers count on them to ensure that their investments are handled legally, ethically and responsibly. Our students count on them to assure that they are receiving an education they can afford and that will ultimately help them build a better life for themselves and their loved ones. Our employees count on them to oversee an administrative structure that values our experience and credentials, welcomes our participation in the governance of the college and supports us in our work so that we can most effectively teach and provide services to the students we love.

It is, indeed, an awesome responsibility that all of our Trustees have accepted but one which, we hope, will bring them a great deal of satisfaction especially as they see the positive impact Lone Star College makes in the lives of nearly 100,000 students.

welcome

AFT – Committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

By the very nature of who we are, embracing diversity, championing equity, and modeling inclusion are at the core of the life of a union. These values are in our DNA and central to the work we do every day.

We, in AFT – Lone Star College, recently reviewed our own Constitution to make sure that the commitment we have in our hearts is adequately reflected by what we have written on paper. To that end, the membership of the Union met on April 10, 2021 and voted to update the language of our own non-discrimination policy to reflect the greatest degree of inclusivity that we could.

The language below is now enshrined in the AFT – Lone Star College Constitution.

Article III, Section 4

“No discrimination shall be shown individual members or applicants for membership because of age, color, race, religious faith, national origin, citizenship or immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, familial status, political beliefs, ethnic origin, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, disability, veteran status, or any other protected status.”

AFT – Lone Star College is a Union where everyone can feel at home.





Progressive Discipline

Critics of unions will sometimes say that we exist to shield bad employees from getting fired. Actually, nothing is farther from the truth. As union leaders, the AFT Executive Board and I firmly believe that serving our students must be the core commitment of every employee of Lone Star College and that the College has every right to hold all employees accountable for performing their job duties professionally and compassionately whether they are faculty, staff or administration.

What we also believe, however, is that all employees have the right to be adequately prepared to be successful in their jobs, to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, to have the opportunity to improve with assistance from their supervisors, and to have well defined due processes in place to assure that their rights as workers are respected and that decisions about their future are not made in a capricious or vindictive manner.

In this regard, I am very pleased to say that we support and endorse a new training on Progressive Discipline that was inaugurated by the office of Human Resources with the support and guidance of the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Governance, Accountability and Compliance. This training is mandatory for all LSC employees with management responsibility and, as a department chair, that includes me.

Much of the material in the training involves policies, forms and procedures that already exist but that needed to be drawn together in one place to be accessible to managers. It also includes a flow chart to explain, not only how the pieces fit together, but what the purpose of the process is supposed to be.

The new training, from the union's view, builds on the valid assumption that the vast majority of work-

ers want to be successful in their jobs, and will be open to correction if presented in a positive way and if they are given a fair opportunity to do better.

The flow chart indicates the importance of informal coaching as first step, recognizing that this will be sufficient for solving many situations. It emphasizes the use of Performance Improvement Plans (or PIPs) when coaching is not enough. PIPs outline in writing both what is expected of the employee and what the supervisor will do to assist the employee to achieve greater success.

“The end goal of a written warning should be to try to salvage an employee.”

Except in certain severe cases such as illegal activities or situations that put students or other employees at risk, the flow chart clearly shows that coaching and PIPs must be given a chance to succeed before formal written warnings are issued.

Written warnings, when given to employees who are trying to do their best, can paralyze them with fear rather than inspiring them to do better, but they can be necessary when more supportive means have failed to result in necessary changes. Even then, the end goal of a written warning should be to try to salvage an employee rather than just being a box to check on the way to termination. The forms and processes outlined in the current training make that distinction very clear. The training also makes it clear that steps beyond the warning level that could lead to termination must give employees due process rights and must be overseen by layers of administration to guarantee fairness.

Again, most of this is not new but it is now in a format that employees and their managers can effectively use.

The trick will be to make sure that all managers across the Lone Star System actually follow these procedures. Many of the problems that we in the union assist our members with involve situations where these processes were ignored. Getting complete buy in at all levels will be a challenge. How-



ever, getting the process in order and requiring training is clearly the right step to get started.

From the union's side, I presented this flow chart and all the accompanying forms in a training I lead for all the members of our Executive Board on a Saturday in March. The more that union leaders understand the process ourselves, the better we will be able to assist our members both in understanding their rights and also their responsibilities.

If all of us can get the Progressive Discipline process working smoothly with buy in from all sides, we will have both a more effective institution and happier employees at all levels. Our thanks to HR, OGC, OGAC, the administration and the Board for organizing and endorsing this process.

John Burghduff

Justice for George

One year out from the tragic events that took place in Minneapolis and at the conclusion of the murder trial of the responsible police officer, AFT-Lone Star College sends its condolences and support to the friends and family of George Floyd and stands in solidarity with all of those who have worked for justice in his name.

The historic connection between the labor movement and the civil rights movement is deep. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final days were spent in support of sanitation workers in Memphis. The storied March on Washington in 1963 was a march for jobs and freedom.

The connection is there because, in the United States of America, economic injustice and racial inequality are inextricably linked. The connection is there because, in the United States of America, abuse of workers and abuse of minorities are inextricably linked, too.

When a black man dies at the hands of racist police, when a worker becomes unemployed because his job is outsourced in the name of stockholder

dividends, when a mother has no health insurance for her child with Covid because the state would not expand Medicaid, these are all different sides of the same unjust picture. Systemic institutional racism engrained for 400 years and an economic system that favors the few over the many invariably collide and the fallout hits our brothers and sisters of color most frequently.

So, while we embrace the humanity of each individual, grieve the loss of this one man and offer our sympathy to all who knew him, we call for a season of change to finally address all of the systemic issues that lead to a seemingly unending stream of black lives lost – both before George Floyd and, sadly, continuing on to this very day.

We call for real police reform that roots out racism, that builds connections between police departments and the communities they serve, and that trains officers to deescalate conflict. Many police officers grieve for the violence in their midst even while they themselves struggle with the economic injustice of being underpaid and overworked.

We call for real access to health care, quality education, food security, affordable housing, equality of treatment in the legal system, and diversity in hiring to right the economic inequities that systemically victimize our brothers and sisters of color disproportionately.

“The historic connection between the labor movement and the civil rights movement is deep.”

We call for an end to violence – both the disorganized violence of random rioters and the institutional violence incited by the previous U.S. President and others justifying themselves with tired racist dog whistles of law and order.

To quote Dr. King as he stood in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial,

“We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.”



Tales from the Unionside

Dr. Diane Ravitch is my education hero, because she has had the courage to admit her past mistakes in supporting the education “reform” movement in America which has become the public school orthodoxy for K-12 institutions over the past 20 years. As an educational research professor at New York University and a former assistant secretary of education under President George H.W. Bush, Ravitch has chronicled the rise and fall of the business model of education in a trilogy of books.

Published in 2010, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* is subtitled *How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. Ravitch’s critique of President George W. Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB) pointed out the harm to students, teachers, principals, and public schools by the push for standardized testing methods for evaluation, and the rush to hand out cash vouchers to pay for the cost of private school tuition.

Following *Death* with its devastating critique of the key features of Bush’s NCLB program, Diane Ravitch, a native Houstonian who attended public schools here, wrote the *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools* in 2013. A lifelong Democrat, Ravitch pulls no punches in attacking President Barack Obama’s collaboration with corporate America in its effort to redesign public schools and make millions in the process.

Although this may not be her final word on U.S. schooling, the NYU research scholar has just written a third book in her fight against applying the business model to public education. *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America’s Public Schools* is a manifesto dedicated to supporting the populist forces challenging the corporatization of K-12 education by those more interested in money and power than in educating the young in a traditional or classical way.

For the past 20 years, the political battle lines in

public education, according to Ravitch, have been drawn between the Disruptors and the Resisters. Using fear, uncertainty, and doubt, the corporate Disruptors and their Republican Party and Democratic Party allies have tried to convince the American people that U.S. schools were beyond repair. Like Donald Trump’s manufactured enemies in the “Deep State,” the Disruptors created a mythical monster in teachers and their unions to put before an unknowing public as the answer to the question, “What is wrong with public education in this country?”

Like the American general who once infamously said the U.S. had to destroy a village in Vietnam to save the village, the Disruptors with last names such as Gates, Zuckerberg, Bloomberg, Bush, and Obama set out to destroy public education to save public education. Armed with a data driven approach of standardized testing as a measure of educational success, the “Goliaths” of the business and political worlds thought the lure of teacher cash bonuses, the threat of firing personnel, the fear of closing schools, and the move to education privatization would lift America’s schools to the top of global school rankings. You do not need to read Ravitch’s latest book to know how the Disruptors’ story turned out; it ended badly for all.

While accepting many of the Disruptors’ beliefs in the early 2000s, Diane Ravitch switched sides in the school reform debate as the test scores came in, and she saw the collateral damage done to students and teachers by high stakes testing. For all the billions states and school districts spent on standardized testing, educational hardware, academic consultants, and online learning programs, student test results have remained unchanged or flat for the past 10 years.

Had America’s schools overtaken Finland’s schools as the world’s best based on international math and reading scores, the business model backers could have used this result as a justification for their “take no prisoners” approach to education. If winning is everything as measured by test scores, then the Disruptors have achieved nothing positive, but they have inflicted harm on students, parents, teachers, and administrators by forcing educators to embrace a “teach to the test” pedagogy. For all the



team's skullduggery in 2017, the Houston Astros at least have a tainted World Series trophy to hold up to their fans.

With the Disruptors being able to have it their way with education over the past two decades, school money has been diverted from where it should have gone which is to pay for smaller class sizes, increased funds for low income school districts, more education boots on the school grounds (classroom aides, nurses, social workers), and higher salaries for teachers. Many of us in college teaching know how poorly educated today's entering freshmen are as teaching to the test has meant that the arts, music, history, social studies, and civics have been shelved in elementary schools in favor of the "kill and drill" hammering that goes on in the testable subjects of English and math.

In *Slaying Goliath*, Diane Ravitch focuses on the education Resisters who believe that the public schools are the foundation for democracy in America. In 2020, we have seen how billionaires Donald Trump and Michael Bloomberg hold democracy and its principles in utter contempt. Businessmen can be great at what they do---making money, but they are ill-suited to work in the fields of government and education. There is an often told story of President Truman indicating that his successor General Eisenhower would have trouble in the White House because commanding people to "Do This or Do That" does not work very well in the Executive Branch like it does in the military or in bottom line businesses.

Looking at the Resisters, Dr. Ravitch identifies some of their education ideas which are at odds with the Bushes and Obamas of the world. Resisters oppose the overuse and misuse of standardized testing. Resisters want to bring back the joy of learning to the classroom. Resisters oppose the privatization of K-12 schooling. Resisters believe in educating the total child and not the testable child. Resisters support the interests of teachers

"Businessmen can be great at what they do---making money, but they are ill-suited to work in the fields of government and education."

and administrators over the interests of billionaires and politicians. According to the NYU professor, "Education for a democratic society addresses the needs of children and young people to grow in knowledge, character, and civil understanding, not just endless preparation to take standardized tests."¹

It is Diane Ravitch's position that the public is catching on

to the fraudulent schemes of the education Disruptors in 2020. Parents, teachers, and students are speaking out about the "robbery" of American schools and the harm that has been done to a generation of students. We cannot undo the past harm, but Ravitch hopes that the future focus will be on educating the whole child, on a commitment to community and democracy, and to a belief in the value of public schools as a national treasure.

Bob Locander

Editor's Note: Locander is a regular political columnist for *The Advocate*.

¹ Diane Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*: (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), p. 75.

Did You Miss Us?

In case you never got to read the ill-fated January – March, 2020 issue of *The Advocate*, it, along with all of the back issues of the newsletter going back to 1979, can be found on our website.

Please visit us at www.aftlonestar.org. Select the dropdown menu at News and select Archives of *The Advocate*.



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

Membership provides
professional career
protection and a united
voice at work.

Join us today!

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

20-21 Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$42.80
Full-time Professional Staff	\$31.25
Full-time Support Staff	\$28.53
Adjunct Faculty	\$16.57
Part-time Staff	\$16.57

Membership Eligibility

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:

www.aftlonestar.org



www.texasaft.org

American Federation of Teachers
Texas AFT
AFL-CIO



www.aft.org

JOIN AFT - LONE STAR TODAY!



<https://join.aft.org>



Here's the best way to sign up:

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 credit card information or 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!)

Contact us at aftlonestar@yahoo.com or visit our webpage: www.aftlonestar.org

**Offset your
membership dues by
using your
AFT PLUS BENEFITS
to save money!**



If you are interested in membership, benefits, or would like to discuss a work-related issue, our AFT Faculty and Staff Vice-Presidents are here to assist. Please don't hesitate to contact them. See the back page of this publication for contact information.

Our members enjoy savings on an array of goods and services with our **Union PLUS** benefits and discounts!

AFT SHOPPING DISCOUNTS:

- ◆ Computers and retail merchandise
- ◆ Dining, movies and entertainment
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Personal vacations, hotel & car rental
- ◆ Save on Southwest Airlines
- ◆ 15% off AT&T
- ◆ Free 2-year online college degree for members and qualifying family members
- ◆ Plus much more!



AFT BENEFIT PROGRAMS:

- ◆ Life, auto, home, and pet insurance
- ◆ Credit counseling
- ◆ Home mortgage program
- ◆ Dental, prescription, vision and hearing programs
- ◆ Scholarships for members and their family members
- ◆ Plus much more!

**New mailing address:**

AFT Lone-Star College
PO Box 310404
Houston, Texas 77231

We're on the Web!

www.aftlonestar.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 ideas. Send your articles to **John Burghduff** via e-mail: aftlonestar@yahoo.com, or submit to any of the following officers.

First Name	Last Name	Officer title	Campus
John	Burghduff	President	Cy-Fair
Alan	Hall	Secretary	North Harris
Chris	Phlegar	Treasurer	North Harris
Steve	King	North Harris Faculty Vice President	North Harris
Rich	Almstedt	Kingwood Faculty Vice President	Kingwood
Pat	Chandler	Kingwood Staff Vice President	Kingwood
Martina	Kusi -Mensah	Montgomery Faculty Vice President	Montgomery
Martha	Neely	Montgomery Staff Vice President	Montgomery
Adrienne	Patton	Cyfair Faculty Vice President	Cy Fair
Cindy	Hoffart-Watson	Cyfair Staff Vice President	Cy Fair
Van	Piercy	Tomball Faculty Vice President	Tomball
Debbie	Stamper	Tomball Staff Vice President	Tomball
Britney	Hall	University Park Staff Vice President	UP
Travis	Hammons	System Office Staff Vice President	System Office
Stephen	Washington	Houston North Faculty Vice President	LSC Houston North

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.

