



The Advocate

What's in Store for this Issue?

AFT – Lone Star College proudly presents our April – May, 2022 issue of The Advocate. Unless something compelling happens over the summer that inspires us to write a special edition, this will be our final issue for the 2021 – 2022 school year. What a year it has been! In this issue we will be addressing some of the biggest challenges of this past year through the lens of our collective lives as part of the Lone Star College Community.

The ongoing Covid pandemic looms large as the driving force behind many of the challenges of this past year. Here at Lone Star, the American Federation of Teachers has been at the forefront of focusing the attention of the college community on protecting ourselves and our students through our Let's Stop Covid! (LSC) campaign. Our first article of this issue focuses on the tremendous success of this campaign as it comes to its formal end and on our exciting final celebration.

The pandemic has sparked the most significant conversation about the nature of work in a generation as industries all across the economy explore a permanent shift towards remote work to one degree or another. Across the country, many universities and community colleges are exploring how and to what degree that shift makes sense in higher education – for our staff employees as much as for our faculty. In our

second article, I report on the shift of work from the Cubicle to the Kitchen Table and how that conversation could and should impact Lone Star College.

Next, Steve Davis returns with his second installment of his ongoing column, Dispatches from the Front. In this article, he explores how the War in

Ukraine has shaken our assumptions about the state of the world and how these events present Lone Star College with both the opportunity and the obligation to embrace a teachable moment across the entire curriculum as both we as a country and the world as a whole stand at the crossroads between democracy and totalitarianism.

Finally, this issue concludes with the latest installment of my column, Know Your Rights. As economic challenges take center stage, more Lone Star employees may be considering the possibility of taking on extra part time work outside of the college. In this article we focus on Lone Star's policy on outside employment. Anyone thinking of taking on a side hustle needs to read this article.

We believe you will find this issue of The Advocate to be thought provoking and informative and we invite you to read on.



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Best of wishes to you all as we approach the hectic time of Final Exam week and the triumphant return of live Commencement ceremonies to follow. We wish all of you a rejuvenating and relaxing summer. Please know that, winter, spring, summer, or fall, your union is here to support you. Join us as we work together, faculty and staff, to make Lone Star a truly great place to work. Watch for our next issue of The Advocate in September – October!



John Burghduff, President
AFT – Lone Star College

Let's Stop Covid! (LSC) Campaign Comes to a Triumphant Conclusion

Many thanks, Lone Star College faculty, staff, administrators, and students who participated in AFT's Let's Stop Covid! (LSC) pledge drive. We are more than excited to report that our pledge garnered over 1500 signatures between the start of spring semester and the end of March.

As you all remember, a survey the union conducted early last fall showed that Lone Star employees were concerned for their safety in light of Covid. At that time, we were in the midst of the surge of cases caused by the Delta variant. Yet science-based discussions about the best ways to keep students and employees safe were mired down in partisan rancor about what employers could and could not mandate.

We in AFT – Lone Star College decided we wanted to do something bold to refocus attention on creating a positive collaborative response, urging everyone to put the debates aside and voluntarily choose to pledge to one another to observe six important safety protocols:

1. Wash your hands!
2. Maintain social distance!
3. Wear a mask!

4. Stay home if you feel sick!
5. Get vaccinated (if it is medically possible for you to do so)!
6. Encourage others to take the pledge!

Of course, we had no idea that the start of Spring Semester would be complicated by a surge of a new variant, Omicron, just as more faculty and students were returning to campus. This made our campaign that much more urgent.

Beginning at the start of the semester, we sent out email and text blasts, and we visited every campus and center to set up sign up tables. We gave away mountains of free "swag": masks, hand sanitizer, buttons, stickers, first aid kits, lanyards, and shirts. In the process, we got to spend time with many of our wonderful employees and students. After nearly two years of remote life, it was great to visit with our fellow Lone Star College family members face to face. We raised awareness, and I hope we helped to reset the conversation about Covid in the direction of how we can help and protect those around us.

At the end of the campaign, on Thursday, April 14, we hosted a huge online celebration over Zoom for employees and students who signed our pledge and

anyone else we could reach. We gave away eight \$200 gift cards to employees and students who influenced others to sign the pledge. We held drawings to give away more gift cards to students and employees who signed the pledge and to those who came to the celebration.

We also had a live band. Up and coming local band Lucid Illusions played for us in a Zoom concert featuring both their own original music and some great covers. The

lead singer of Lucid Illusions is a former student at Lone Star College and his mother is both on the faculty and a member of our union. It was an exciting performance. Everyone had a great time. AND we think this is the first time a local of the American Federation of Teachers has ever hosted a rock concert.





Our campaign is now officially over and it is such a relief that illnesses and hospitalizations are way down. Everyone feels safer and the need for safety precautions has lessened. However, if more surges come, we urge everyone to remember our pledge and voluntarily recommit to the six safety protocols we highlighted in our campaign. Sooner or later, we will get completely to the other side of this pandemic and we will be glad that we did our part to help each other.

We want to finish this report with some words of sincere thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make our Let's Stop Covid! Campaign a success:

The members of our dedicated campaign steering committee who spent months designing and implementing the whole program:

- Cliff Hudder, LSC-Montgomery
- Britney Hall, LSC-System Office, UP
- Adrienne Patton, LSC-CyFair
- Cindy Hoffart-Watson, LSC-CyFair
- John Burghduff, LSC-CyFair
- Kat Kupelian, Texas AFT

Our amazing AFT – Lone Star College organizer, Daler Wade, who spent countless hours staffing our campaign sign up tables and welcoming students and employees alike with her warmth and charm.

The members of the band **Lucid Illusions** who made our celebration a huge event:

- Jordan Lane, guitar and vocals
- Donovan Hanson, drums
- Conner Graham, bass

AND the 1500 faculty, staff, administrators, and students who signed our pledge!

*Thank
you*



The Cubicle and the Kitchen Table- Reimagining the Workplace in the Community College

The workplace is transforming before our eyes.

The trend was there before the pandemic; after two years of Covid lockdowns, the die is cast. A transformation that might have taken a generation is happening – and has already happened - before our eyes. The workplace is moving from the Cubicle to the Kitchen Table. You can provide plenty of stories of your own. Here are two in my inner circle.

My niece's husband works for a high-tech company in Kansas City, but he hasn't set foot in that town in several years. Everything he does is online on the computer and his company discovered long ago that that computer does not have to be sitting in a cubicle in Kansas City for work to get done. Instead, that computer is sitting in their home (although not literally at the kitchen table) in LaPorte where my niece is a band director in the junior high school. He had been working from home for quite some time when the pandemic hit, and was able to mentor his coworkers who had been working in a more traditional office setting in how to work effectively remotely.

My brother in law is a grants writer for the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. For years he commuted from their home in Clear Lake to the island every day but, when Covid hit, he and his colleagues all got their computer equipment and files and took them to their houses. With the pandemic waning, UTMB realized that the grants office was working just fine remotely and told everyone to continue to work from home. That office complex can now be reconfigured into additional patient and research space.

These stories are far from unique. You have your own. The high-tech giants in Silicon Valley have offered permanent work from home options for many of their workers. As a result, for the first time in the history of ever, California is experiencing a degree of out-migration, as workers relocate to other parts of the country according to their personal and family interests. This transformation could mean nothing less than the



revitalization of small-town America as well as the easing of the affordable housing crisis and other social issues in the big cities.

How to manage the transformation from Cubicle to Kitchen Table is easiest to understand in industries like high-tech and financial services. What might this transformation look like in professions defined by the direct physical presence of humans together such as entertainment, the service sector, medicine – and higher education? To what degree and in what ways can these workplaces transform from the Cubicle to the Kitchen Table?

Some colleges and universities are aggressively exploring this question. In a recent article¹, Inside Higher Ed interviewed officials at two major universities, Boston University and Virginia Tech, that have been aggressively implementing flexible work plans for their employees.

Although one might immediately assume these universities are thinking about faculty and online teaching, in both cases, the main focus has been on staff.

Natalie McKnight, dean of the College of General Studies at BU and co-chair of their Committee on the Future of Staff Work, reports that “over a couple of thousand” staff employees at her institution have been approved to work two days a week from home.

A process has been developed where applicants who wanted to try out this program would be vetted by their immediate supervisors, and the supervisor’s supervisor had to sign off. To maintain cohesion of teams, coverage of the office, and equity, supervisors have leeway in coordinating schedules in the best interest of their departments at the department level. They identified some job categories that were “100 percent forward facing” that could not really be done remotely – the police force and cafeteria workers to name two. When asked whether departments maintained productivity, Ms. McKnight reported that BU had established productivity metrics for all of the various job categories in the university well before Covid and they could objectively

show that those metrics have continued to be met and even exceeded.

The benefit of this program is greater work-life balance for employees which translates to a higher rate of retention of employees for the university – particularly among women. Nationally, women dropped out of the workplace at a far higher rate than men during the pandemic largely because of child-care and other family related issues.

Bryan Garey, vice president for human resources at Virginia Tech, reports that nearly 10 percent of the work-

force at his university has already qualified to work 100 percent off-site. 40 to 50 percent more have qualified for some form of flexible work agreement. He chooses to use the phrase “flexible work” over “remote work” because, in their policy, they consider flexibility in work hours as well as flexibility in loca-


tion. This allows the university to embrace what he refers to as a new paradigm about caregiving and work – that employees can navigate their caregiving duties and their work duties around each other in order to be more effective at both.

Arizona State² is another example of a university that established a definite protocol for various flexible work formats including:

1. Four 10-hour day work weeks
2. Nine day, 80 hour work schedules
3. Staggered stop and start times
4. Working weekends or evenings
5. Working during second or third shifts
6. Working with shortened lunch periods
7. Hybrid or full remote work

The movement of the higher education workplace from the Cubicle to the Kitchen Table either through completely remote work, or a hybrid of campus and remote work is not limited to universities. Community colleges are definitely joining the conversation.



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	<p>Montgomery College (the one in Maryland, not LSC – Montgomery) has a defined flexible work policy that emphasizes that, although they expect that their college will return to mostly an on-campus focus, there will be room for remote work for many staff employees.³</p> <p>In our own neighborhood, San Jacinto College offers a remote work arrangement allowing eligible full-time employees to work remotely a maximum of two days a week.⁴ Arrangements can be short term (under three months) or long term (three to five months). The website is not clear whether these arrangements are eligible for renewal. According to their website, “Staff and administrators who have an established record of high performance and self-motivation are strong candidates for remote work. The employee must have a track record of using good judgment and must have above average job knowledge and technical/computer knowledge.”</p> <p>Although the remote work procedures vary a great deal between the colleges and universities cited above, I see some definite common themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparency - Each institution has established a transparent and well documented process for applying and being considered for remote work. 2. Local Decision Making - Supervisors are empowered at the department level to make decisions about whether remote or hybrid work would be fruitful in their office, who would be eligible, and how schedules would be arranged to make sure the functions of the department are met. 3. Accountability to a Higher Level – Decisions about remote work made at the department level require a signature at least one level of administration higher to ensure equitability and consistency. 4. Productivity Metrics – Productivity metrics are documented for all departments (whether employees are working remotely or not) and employees are held accountable for meeting those measures. These metrics need not be complicated. They can be as simple as, “are procurements handled accurately in a timely manner?”, “Are student requests for assistance answered in a specified time frame?”, etc. 5. Review of Remote Work Arrangements – Processes for revoking individual remote work arrangements are in place if the arrangement is not successful or if the needs of the department change. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Ongoing Discussions – College / university wide conversations are ongoing about the scope and effectiveness of remote and hybrid work with the expectation that adjustments will probably be Needed. <p>As you can see, the focus of all of these examples has been on staff. It is for staff that the paradigm shift from Cubicle to Kitchen Table would be most profound. These positions have been traditionally bound to specified physical offices on traditional work schedules.</p> <p>Higher education faculty, on the other hand, have historically worked more flexible schedules – often doing much of their grading, class preparation, and even institutional service work at home or elsewhere, and at nontraditional hours. Online classes, which by nature are 24/7 affairs, have made remote or at least hybrid work arrangements not only desirable but essential for many faculty. The pandemic showed many faculty and students who would never have considered it before that they can be successful in remote learning environments. Although colleges and universities are returning to face to face learning, it is inevitable that a higher percentage of classes will be online than was the case before the pandemic. It is only the exact percentage that is in question.</p> <p>Old policies at some community colleges (including Lone Star) that require faculty to be physically present on campus a certain number of days per week have become anachronistic and get in the way of serving students in the evolving environment.</p> <p>How the transition of the workplace from Cubicle to Kitchen Table would (and should) work out in higher education—both for staff and faculty— is very much up in the air. The potential benefits are striking:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remote or at least hybrid work could make it easier for some employees to balance work and family obligations. This will almost certainly mean that colleges will retain employees who, in order to meet family obligations, would otherwise feel that their only option was to quit. 2. Hiring new high-quality employees would be easier as candidates are attracted to the possibility of more flexible work.



3. Strides in the important areas of diversity, inclusion, and equity are a definite possibility as flexibility removes potential barriers to some people.
4. Real energy savings are possible if there are at least some days of the week when some employees don't have to hit the freeways.
5. Students could potentially be better served if flexible schedules result in job functions available later in the evenings or on weekends and, most definitely, to a greater degree online.

Challenges are just as real. How do we determine which job functions are "100 percent forward facing" and to what degree other functions can be handled remotely? How would the results of these deliberations affect morale? How do you establish a positive institutional culture when people are not physically around each other? How do you establish clear and transparent decision-making processes? How do you make sure that all the work is being done and done in a way that serves students better?

These are not easy questions. The easy way out is to just say "Forget about it! Everyone comes back to campus all the time! No exceptions." Sally Amoruso and Brian Elliott, in a recent op-ed piece in Inside Higher Ed answer this possible response as follows:

"College and university presidents must resist the urge to return to the comfort of pre-pandemic norms and instead open themselves up to the potential benefits that remote work can offer their employees and their institutions. If they don't, they will face higher staff turnover and greater institutional instability.

"... [They must] instead reimagine campus life as something new altogether, with student needs and desires at the center. Doing so is the only way to adequately prepare students for the new distributed, digital-first and flexible world of work that awaits them upon graduation. Remote work will not kill the campus experience. On the contrary, it is vital to its rebirth."⁵

Some universities and community colleges are leaning in to the conversation of how and to what degree our

workplace will transform from Cubicle to Kitchen Table. That conversation is definitely a work in progress. Lone Star College prides itself on its history of innovation and needs to participate in and be at the forefront of this conversation. The sources I have referenced in this article provide considerable insight into how that

conversation is going elsewhere and how it could go at Lone Star. I highly recommend them to everyone.

John Burghdoff

How do we determine which job functions are "100 percent forward facing" and to what degree other functions can be handled remotely?

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3. Flexible Work Arrangements, Montgomery College Human Resources Website, <https://info.montgomerycollege.edu/offices/human-resources/flexible-work-arrangements.html>
4. Remote Work Procedure (Procedure IV.4005.A.a), San Jacinto College Website, <https://www.sanjac.edu/about-san-jac/college-operations/policies-and-procedures/procedure-4-19-telecommuting>
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A Union of Professionals



Dispatches from the Front # 2: Thoughts on Ukraine

Steve Davis, Professor of History, LSC – Kingwood

Last month, my wife and I were in London during Spring Break to visit a historian friend I hadn't seen in more than forty years. On a gray Sunday a few blocks from Trafalgar Square, we walked upon a massive pro-Ukraine street demonstration. Thousands heard a series of speakers denouncing the Russian invaders in the most passionate language. Most of this was in Ukrainian but some from the platform called out Vladimir Putin in profane Anglo-Saxon. There was a sea of the now-familiar yellow and blue Ukrainian banners and a fair number of flags with wide blue and white stripes. We learned from participants that these were Russian flags with their blood-red lower edges removed. I walked up to a woman with a protest poster and asked her if I could take a picture of it to show my students back home. It features Hitler and Putin standing alongside one another with an inscription between them that says, "Hell is waiting for you, tyrants." Right below is a boiling vat ready to receive the dictators. This one simple image for me did so much more to encapsulate the nature of this war than the commentaries of all the area experts put together.

It is clear to me that the war in Ukraine is a teachable moment that we must fully exploit in the classroom. Just after the Russian invasion commenced on February 24, I was covering WW II and the origins of the Cold War in an Honors section of HIST 1302. Hitler's targeting of Ukraine in his drive to the East in 1941 took on unusual importance and clarity as did the formation of NATO in 1948 as a means of containing Soviet expansion westward. One of the quotes I regularly use in class is from the British economist, John Maynard Keynes: "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?" Keynes stresses the intellectual importance of altering our interpretations when new facts and developments require it, of not being so stuck in ideological rigidities that we refuse to adjust to new realities. I had always been skeptical for instance of the wisdom of NATO expansion. But the facts on the ground in Eastern Europe have now changed and I have a revised outlook because of that. Is there any doubt that Putin would

have moved on the Baltic countries by now had it not been for NATO's Article 5 which states that an attack on one is an attack on all? Is it not understandable that Sweden and Finland are now pounding on NATO's door given Russia's aggressive behavior in their backyards? Shouldn't Georgia come into the Alliance to safeguard its own sovereignty and to block Putin's move in that direction? If the Russians feel threatened by NATO's movement eastward, that's their problem. Putin and other Soviet nostalgists will need to be satisfied that their country still occupies by far the greatest extent of territory in the world. In recent classes, I've made clear my fresh perspective on this issue. Our students need to see us model this kind of real-world flexibility as we navigate such challenging times.

I think our current academic approach should be one of "Ukraine Across the Curriculum." The war's relevance is obvious in History and Political Science classes where foreign policy is a major component. But how about in a Philosophy course where the group could examine the ethics of force or in a Psychology section where authoritarian personality types like Putin and their followers could be the focus? Economics classes could examine the material costs of war or the nexus between war and inflation or compare the free trade unions of Ukraine to their state-controlled Russian counterparts. My friend and colleague Joan Samuelson has told me how students in her English class on the literature of the Holocaust have so passionately used the Ukraine story as the basis of discussions and essays. Students care about this fight. Many of them are young and idealistic and want to take a stand against injustice. If we teachers are oblivious to the Ukraine war, we run the risk of becoming irrelevant ourselves.

All of us who work at this college are leaders in some capacity. Is there any more inspiring example of a leader who has grown in office and faced up to crushing responsibilities than Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy? Here is a man who, while trained as a lawyer, made his career in acting and stand-up comedy before becoming a politician. One could reasonably doubt his capacity as his country's head. And yet, like Harry Truman, he has revealed strength of character in this crucible of national calamity. Recall that Truman was a Missouri back-bencher in the U.S. Senate when picked by FDR to be his running mate in



1944. A failed clothing merchant and product of the Kansas City political machine whose formal education did not extend beyond a high school diploma, he hardly seemed White House material. And yet upon ascending to the presidency, Truman did such a remarkable job that most professional historians rank him among the office's "near-greats." What role models Truman and Zelenskyy are for all of us who in our work or personal lives frequently feel ill-prepared or overwhelmed. "Grit" has become a buzzword in educational circles in recent years as an essential component of student and other types of success. The 33rd American president and Ukraine's current leader personify the concept.

Ultimately, the Ukraine story underscores how important truth-telling is in everything we do. When George Orwell went to Spain to fight the fascists in 1936, he witnessed firsthand the damage that modern war does to truth. As he later recalled, he read about battles that never happened and encountered silence in the case of mass casualties. The fascists and Communists in that conflict, though on opposite sides, used the same shameless dishonesty in their accounts, so much so that Orwell experienced the feeling that "the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world." Certainly, anyone in our country who samples even a few minutes of Fox News or talk radio has felt the same.

Putin and his cynical posse lie without hesitation or remorse. No, the Russian battleship, Moskva, which sank in the Black Sea, did not founder on its own. It disappeared because the intrepid Ukrainians hit it with two cruise missiles and sent the cursed vessel to the bottom. No, the Ukrainian civilians dead in the ditches of Kyiv suburbs were not actors in a scene staged by Zelenskyy to win Western support. They were victims of a brutal Russian military long known for its rape and murder culture. No, the true Russian mission in Ukraine was not to "de-nazify" the country; its president is Jewish and its political institutions, while imperfect, are democratic. Those of us committed to the whole truth will acknowledge that actual Nazis are involved in Ukraine's defense, namely in the form of the Azov Battalion that has engaged in the defense of Mariupol. But to characterize the entire Ukrainian cause in those terms is an outrageous distortion. The real threat of the extreme right emanates from Russia,

which every day resembles more and more Mussolini's corporate state. The real threat to world peace is from the fascist monster in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, and from his acolytes around the world who speak openly of his "genius" and mimic his authoritarian style.

As always, I write in this space from the perspective of a classroom teacher. My ultimate take-away from the Ukraine crisis is that it underscores what we need to show our students every day. We must work hard, love learning, think critically, and always tell the truth, whatever the consequences. In this chaotic world, these are enduring objectives. This has never been more imperative, for as Orwell might say, the clock is striking thirteen and too many contend that two plus two is five.

Steve Davis, LSC-Kingwood



Sometimes knowing your rights is mostly about knowing how your rights are limited. That is true for the topic of this installment of Know Your Rights: Outside Employment.

Most of us probably assume that, once we have finished our work for the day at Lone Star College, the rest of our time is free to use however we choose. We might volunteer with our kids' after school activities. We might participate in programs at our church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. We might pursue our favorite hobbies or read or garden. We might go to the clubs with our friends. We might stay home and chill out with our families. We might even decide to find a little side hustle – some part time job to kill a few hours and pick up some extra cash.



We might not even think there would be any reason to tell our supervisors what we do with our time once our duties at Lone Star College are fulfilled. We are not, after all, slaves of the college. We probably would, however, understand that the college would be concerned if what we do in our free time impairs our work when we are “on the clock”. Teaching a class with a hangover or skipping a staff meeting to arrange a soccer game would clearly warrant a conversation with our supervisor or HR.

For the most part, the college really doesn’t attempt to regulate our private time. The one big exception is outside employment. Whether you are thinking about teaching a night class at another college, or working a few hours for a store, or even opening up a small business of your own, if it is something for which you are going to earn money, Lone Star College policy requires that you get the permission of the college BEFORE you take on that job.

The specific policy on “additional employment” may be found at <https://www.lonestar.edu/emp-rights-privileges.htm>. Since this could be such an important issue for some employees, I’m going to print the entire policy here. Please note that this applies to ALL employees - both faculty and staff:

IV.F.4. Additional Employment



IV.F.4.1. Policy

The College’s mission requires its employees’ professional endeavors to be focused on their primary jobs at the College. The College may permit additional employment outside of an employee’s primary job if the additional employment does not negatively impact the College’s mission.

IV.F.4.2. Definitions

Additional Employment means any paid employment or contract work outside of an employee’s primary job at the College.

IV.F.4.3. Additional Employment Restricted

As determined by the employee’s supervisor (college dean for faculty), a full-time employee may not undertake additional employment that (1) directly or indirectly interferes with the employee’s primary job; (2) has been offered because of the employee’s official connection to the College; (3) uses College resources—including but not limited to computers, copiers, materials, equipment, or offices; (4) was not approved in advance and in writing by both the employee’s supervisor and the respective college president, vice chancellor, or other operational officer reporting directly to the Chancellor (“chief area officer”); (5) is expressly limited by the employee’s employment contract (if any) with the College; or (6) violates any principle established in this Board Policy.

When a full-time College employee wishes to engage in additional employment, including self-employment or an additional position within the College, the employee must report the nature and scope of the outside employment to the employee’s immediate supervisor. The employee may not engage in the employment unless and until it is approved in writing by the employee’s supervisor and the applicable college president, vice chancellor, or chief area officer.

IV.F.4.4. Commissioned Peace Officers

College peace officers seeking to work additional jobs are subject to the additional procedures and guidelines prepared by the administrator serving as Police Commissioner or designee.

This is the end of the policy section. Please be sure to reread this carefully a couple of times if you currently have an outside job or are considering taking one. Especially note that you MUST get the PERMISSION of the college BEFORE you start this job even if you are working for yourself. There is a specific form you will need to fill out requesting authorization of outside employment which you should be able to obtain from your immediate supervisor. For faculty, that form even limits to two the number of classes you can teach for other colleges in a given semester.





Before we go any farther, I should emphasize that there are, in fact, very good reasons a public employer, like a college, should pay closer attention to outside employment than other types of after work activities. As a matter of state law, these legitimate concerns are outlined in the Texas Government Code, Section 572.01 part of which reads as follows:

“(a) A state officer or employee should not:

“(2) accept other employment or engage in a business or professional activity that the officer or employee might reasonably expect would require or induce the officer or employee to disclose confidential information acquired by reason of the official position;

“(3) accept other employment or compensation that could reasonably be expected to impair the officer's or employee's independence of judgment in the performance of the officer's or employee's official duties;”

These concerns fall under the broad category of conflict of issue, and public community college employees are considered to be state employees. Here are a couple of scenarios, as examples, in which outside employment could put a community college employee in conflict of interest:

- A faculty member who takes a part time job working for a textbook publisher, perhaps proofreading, or writing supplemental materials, would have a conflict of interest if he or she were serving on a textbook adoption committee and that publisher has textbooks in the running.
- An employee involved in executing procurement contracts who works for an outside company part time would have a conflict of interest if he or she had a decision-making role on a contract for which that company would like to submit a bid.

Because of these reasonable concerns, every community college that I am aware of in Texas has a policy that in some way puts parameters around outside employment. That said, it is worthy of note that Lone Star

College's policies about outside employment are stricter and more far reaching than those at other major community colleges in Texas.

Many community colleges in Texas have adopted a model policy manual designed by a professional organization called the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). Among the colleges that use the TASB policy manual are:

- Houston Community College
- Austin Community College
- Dallas College (formerly Dallas County Community College District)
- Tarrant County College
- El Paso Community College

For all of these colleges, the policies on outside employment are identical or nearly so and they are short. This is the standard TASB policy on outside work:

“DBF (Local): An employee shall disclose in writing to his or her immediate supervisor any outside employment that in any way creates a potential conflict of Interest with the proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or with the best interest of the College District.”

Lone Star's policy on outside employment is definitely an outlier among community college policies in Texas.

Don't worry about what DBF means. That is just the notation for the policy's location in the policy manual. Notice that the TASB policy only speaks of disclosing employment to the college, not applying for permission. That is a

significant difference. Furthermore, the requirement to disclose only applies if the outside employment represents a potential conflict of interest.

Like Lone Star, San Jacinto College and Alamo Colleges have written their own policy manuals rather than using the TASB model policy manual. Like in the TASB manual, both San Jac's and Alamo's policy manuals require employees to report employment that might represent a conflict of interest. In addition, both policy manuals specify that employees cannot do external



work during their regular duty hours with the college and cannot use college property to perform the duties of that extra job. These stipulations are quite reasonable. They protect the interests of the college without unduly interfering in employees' behavior outside of work hours.

Lone Star's policy on outside employment is definitely an outlier among community college policies in Texas. As such, it would be worthwhile to start a conversation about changing it to be more in alignment with other colleges and with the evolving nature of work.

Policy changes take months or even years to go through. In the meantime, the policy I quoted above is the policy that is in place. Whether they like the policy or not, both supervisors and rank and file employees who choose not to follow that policy put themselves in a risky situation. As your union president, I'm going to take the liberty to offer some advice to both parties:



1. **To supervisors**, be careful not to try to apply the policy in situations where it does not apply. Notice that Section IV.F.4.2 quoted above states that "Additional Employment means any **paid** employment or contract work outside of an employee's primary job at the College." (emphasis mine). I have heard of an instance (although I can't directly verify it) in which an employee was told he could not coach his kids' sports teams even though he was not paid for doing so. The policy does not give supervisors the right to regulate anything other than paid work. Attempting to do so would make you subject to a grievance which you would likely lose.
2. **To rank and file employees**, make sure you comply with the requirement in this policy to fill out the proper forms and request authorization BEFORE you accept any outside work. As a union leader I

assure you it is pretty much impossible to defend a union member who is knowingly violating a college policy. About all you can do if caught is to apologize penitently and beg for forgiveness. You might believe that the policy is not right but, although it is a stricter policy than what other colleges have, that does not necessarily mean that the policy would not stand up in a court of law. I don't recommend you put yourself in the position of finding out. These processes take years, and, in the meantime, you would probably be unemployed. You might not have known that you are supposed to ask for authorization to work outside the college. You might be afraid that your supervisor will say no and that you'll lose the income. Losing the side income would be bad, but not as bad as losing **all** your income if you were ruled to have been insubordinate. After some irregularities came to light during the course of the Covid era, Lone Star administration is paying attention to employees who violate college policy. If you've gotten away with unauthorized outside employment in the past, you probably won't in the future. So, in the short-term, abide by the outside employment policy, and fill out the request forms – starting now! Don't start an outside job, including self-employment, until and unless you get permission to do so.

Long-term, let's start a conversation about this policy within Lone Star. Let's work to see if we can get the policy on outside employment to be more in alignment with what other Texas colleges do. Employees owe dedicated work to the college, and conflicts of interest need to be avoided for everyone's sake, but Lone Star must not unduly interfere with how employees live their lives outside of work hours.

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In case you never got to read our previous issues of *The Advocate*, (along with all of the back issues of the newsletter going back to 1979)

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- ☐ 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.

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

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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 AFT locals throughout Texas

Membership provides
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BENEFITS

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- 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

21-22 Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$44.90
Full-time Professional Staff	\$29.06
Full-time Support Staff	\$29.06
Adjunct Faculty	\$17.98
Part-time Staff	\$17.98

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



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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.

**New mailing address:**

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**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.

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Steve	King	North Harris Faculty Vice President	North Harris
Chris	Davis	Kingwood Faculty Vice President	Kingwood
Pat	Chandler	Kingwood Staff Vice President	Kingwood
Cliff	Hudder	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
Britney	Hall	University Park Staff Vice President	UP
Travis	Hammons	System Office Staff Vice President	System Office
Stephen	Washington	Houston North Faculty Vice President	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.

