



The Advocate

“Better Together” and “Trust”

LSC 20|20 is defined as “a leader-led cultural transformation process designed to create a culture of accountability and achieve Lone Star College’s key organizational results.” AFT-Lone Star has embraced this initiative and will continue to help promote it. In that spirit, I would like to recommend a concrete way for LSC to be “Better Together” and to improve “Trust,” two of the six cultural beliefs in the LSC 20|20 program.

AFT-Lone Star is happy that all employees received a two percent raise this fall, and that administration seems focused on fixing the numerous compensation inequities created by the previous administration, a protracted process no doubt. General Counsel and the Board of Trustees are making substantial progress on revision of the LSC Policy Manual as well.

Unfortunately, LSC is currently facing major budget problems with little explanation. Many employees have told me they are mystified that several presidents haven taken drastic measures to balance their budgets. For instance, this past summer, LSC-NH laid off tutors in the middle of the summer, an action that undermines student success. Last summer, some departments at LSC-CF limited faculty to a single sheet of paper front and back for exams to save printing costs, which allowed budget concerns to override best educational practices. Student emergency funds, fine arts scholarships, and faculty professional development funds have been adversely affected at different campuses. And perhaps most surprising, some campus deans have been instructed to pend or cut more than thirty percent of their course sections for Spring 2017 because their adjunct budgets have been severely underfunded.

Ironically, cutting sections reduces revenue, potentially exacerbating LSC’s budget woes. One can only wonder about the impact the potential enrollment drop might have on LSC going into the upcoming legislative session in January. Employees learned nothing about LSC’s budget problems in the system-wide convocation in August, but college presidents did note in their respective college convocations, or in subsequent open forums, that their auxiliary funds were drastically reduced this fiscal year. Employees were given little, if any, explanation for the reduction, however.

We all know that LSC’s rapid enrollment growth began to level off in Spring 2012, but, as a system, LSC enrollment was still up two percent this fall. So that doesn’t seem to account entirely for the current budget situation.

Because of the lack of information, there are many rumors circulating among employees. We do know, however, that on May 26, Channel 2 News reported that LSC owes Harris County \$2.024M in back property taxes (see <http://www.click2houston.com/news/lone-star-college-owes-over-2-million-in-back-taxes>). In 2008, the previous chancellor told me that he planned to rent space at the newly purchased LSC-UP facility to diversify revenue sources, similar to initiatives he had undertaken as president of the College of Southern Nevada. I immediately pointed out that that there would likely be tax implications involved. He scoffed and said not to worry, claiming, “We know what we’re doing.” Apparently, the previous administration was over-confident. When a non-profit organization like Lone Star College uses its property for non-profit activities, it

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owes no property taxes. But when a non-profit organization rents space to a for-profit organization, it is well known among local tax experts that the non-profit is required to pay property tax on that space.

Within the context of a \$348M operating budget this fiscal year, an unexpected \$2.024M property tax bill does not seem to fully account for the drastic budget problems we are witnessing, however. Although the Channel 2 article says nothing about it, it is possible that if Lone Star generated income from renting property to for-profit organizations, it probably incurred a federal income tax bill. If property taxes went unpaid for so many years, it seems reasonable to wonder if LSC also owes back federal income taxes. Most likely, that potential liability would be substantially smaller than the back property taxes, however. I believe there must be more to this story.

Chancellor Head may have provided a clue at the October LSC Board of Trustees meeting in a brief report about rebuilding the fund balance, a reserve that is supposed to be at least 16% of Lone Star College's annual budget in order for Standard and Poor's to give the college a AAA bond rating. In previous Board meetings, the CFO has explained that Standard and Poor's actually prefers that the fund balance be 20%. When questioned by one of the trustees in the October meeting, Chancellor Head stated that it is substantially better for LSC to maintain the fund balance because of the difference it makes in interest rates on bonds. He went on to state that he had a meeting coming up with Standard and Poor's, but said nothing about why the fund balance needs to be rebuilt. I suspect it is relevant that at the August Board meeting, the longtime Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance (LSC's Chief Financial Officer) was terminated after being on administrative leave for several months. Speculation is rampant that this development is directly related to LSC's current budget woes.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) may have provided another clue in its May 2016 "Financial Condition Analysis of Texas Public Community College Districts." As the Executive Summary explains, THECB is required by state law to assess the financial condition of community colleges for the Texas Legislature "and to identify the potential for financial stress at specific community colleges." On the basis of seven financial indicators, the report concludes that 25 out of 50 Texas community college districts "could be experiencing some financial stress," but that seven "are worthy of additional discussion." Lone Star College is one of the seven because it failed to meet

three of the indicator thresholds, apparently because of problems with investments. I will leave it to interested readers to examine the report in more detail.

No doubt, LSC's budget situation is complex, and there may be confidential personnel issues or legal issues involved, but I believe that employees can be trusted with more information, precisely because we *are* better together. By contrast, when there is a vacuum of information, uncertainty leads to speculation, speculation leads to rumors and rumors lead to suspicion. We can work through complex problems in the sort of culture which we are attempting to implement and maintain through LSC 20|20. Morale is always better when we are working together on goals as team members rather than struggling to understand the opaque actions of LSC administration, a major pastime during the seven years of the previous administration. Indeed, we are now striving for greater transparency and trust precisely because both were in short supply during those seven years.

I want to be clear that I have no reason to believe that these problems were created on Chancellor Head's watch. Perhaps he's still straightening out problems he inherited from his predecessor. Many high-level administrative positions have been vacated and refilled in the 2.5 years that Dr. Head has been Chancellor, and employees recently learned that LSC will leave Jakarta in May, 2017. Chancellor Head seems to be pulling back rather substantially from the major initiatives of his predecessor, and I would certainly welcome a renewed focus on our original mission of providing high quality, affordable education to our local community. AFT-Lone Star has always been quite vocal in support of that goal. Rather than focus on blame, I am simply encouraging our leaders to implement LSC 20|20 by example. I believe that LSC leaders can trust rank and file employees and, in so doing, earn more trust from them.

Alan Hall

¹Gilmore, Roland. *Financial Condition Analysis of Texas Public Community College Districts*. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. May 2016. Web. 15 Nov. 2016.

www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/7462.PDF?CFID=50172854&CFTOKEN=65432654



AFT & LSC: Better Together

A challenge facing rapidly-growing Lone Star College is providing the right mix of support programs for its diverse student body. This can be especially confounding when business metrics are favored to guide budget decision-making. That is, what's the ROI (return on the investment)?

One program that got chopped in the LSC-North Harris budget was the annual Sisterhood Retreat, sponsored by the Women's Resource Center. The program, a one-day retreat that takes female students to spend the day in the home of a faculty member, serves a maximum of twelve. Despite its positive evaluations from past retreats and reputation for encouraging females to speak their truth, a decision was made by the administration to cut the budget for the retreat to zero, better to protect the larger programs that served more students.

Two faculty members, who have helped Cassandra Boyd organize and host the retreat in the past, decided they could handle the materials for the workshop and lunch, but there were no funds for transportation.

When the AFT heard, Alan Hall offered the needed \$450 to lease two vans and fill them with gasoline. As a result, nine students spent the day in a circle of trust reflecting and discussing their core values, their goals and aspirations, and their gifts and blessings. They discussed their past accomplishments, their current contributions, created bucket lists, and planned their legacies.

The experience was both powerful and empowering for these woman. In their evaluations, participants shared what they got from the retreat:

The retreat really made me think about what I wanted out of life.

Sharing something deep was powerful.

The retreat allowed us to get out of our shells.

I see how embracing my strong points helps me be my best/become my best self.



It was so calm and relaxing to be able to take a step back and look at our goals in life.

I loved how we all came together and reflected on how every woman is fabulous.

We were able to get to know people different from ourselves and communicate (on a deeper level).

Everything was amazing. There should definitely be more retreats in the future.

This retreat was a blessing to me.

This program would not have happened this semester without AFT's contribution, but bigger is not always better, and the union saw the inherent value of a small, intimate retreat for young women who are still developing their identities. Thanks to the AFT, a tiny retreat program was saved and nine invigorated students returned to campus to face final exams with unshakable confidence.

Joyce Boatright
Professor of Developmental
Studies
LSC-North Harris

The Grievance Policy— How Far Have We Come? Where Do We Need to Go?

Grievance policies are documents most of us never think about.

As long as we're working hard to do our jobs and trying to get along with the people around us, we don't expect to need a grievance policy. That's for the other guys. At least, that's how we feel until we get an 8:00 AM summons to our supervisor's office. What happened, or how it happened, we're not quite sure, but suddenly the job we love feels less secure. Only then do most employees page through the policy manual looking for guidance about what to do.

A few short years ago, under the previous chancellor, Richard Carpenter, Lone Star College had a grievance



policy on paper that was essentially useless in practice. If you were a non-contractual employee, you were particularly in trouble. Most staff members are in this category. Your only recourse at this time was to appeal to the supervisor's supervisor whose ruling was final. That second level supervisor might or might not have been able to judge impartially. Some staff members had rejection emails in their inboxes almost before they got back to their desks from their hearing.

If you were on a contract, you could appeal a decision to a higher level. However, the administration blocked you from appealing all the way to the Board of Trustees. The Board's primary duties are to provide impartial governance of the college and to supervise the Chancellor. Although it should rarely interject into decisions about day-to-day operations, the Board is, among other things, the watchdog making sure the college is being run legally and ethically. As the college policy manual says in Section I.B.2.03, paragraph (c), the Board has "the exclusive power and duty to oversee the management of the System."

Filing a grievance against the person who has power over you is a scary thing. You would want advice and support from someone who cared about your well-being—a friend, a coworker, a union representative, or even a lawyer. The former Lone Star College administration sought to block employees from having any kind of representation in the grievance process. As it turns out, this ruling was a clear violation of state law. The AFT had to file suit against that administration to protect the employees' right to representation. Eventually, but only after thousands of dollars in legal fees had been spent, the administration backed down.

Fast forward to the arrival of Dr. Steve Head as Chancellor, Mr. Mario Castillo as General Counsel, and a new, more employee-friendly Board of Trustees. One of the earliest priorities of the new administration was fixing the grievance policy, which it achieved quickly. The new policy gives non-contractual workers the same rights as contractual workers, opens up the possibility of appealing to the Board, and enshrines workers' rights to representation. The policy adds an initial step of an informal dispute resolution meeting prior to the filing of a formal grievance. Many times, a conflict can be resolved if the parties involved could just sit down and talk out the problem without having to get into hearings that feel like

court proceedings. The old policy had no mechanism for fostering such a meeting.



If you ever need it, the grievance policy, as well as clarifying procedures and copies of necessary forms, is easily found online at www.lonestar.edu/policy. Look for Section IV.F.10. One of the benefits of AFT membership is that we can guide our members through this process and provide representation and support—including an attorney if needed.

Several members of the AFT have made use of this new policy over the last few months. For some of them it has worked as designed with problems resolved at the lowest possible level. Some, however, have encountered serious problems. The problems are not always with the policy itself but with the implementation of the policy. In these cases, faulty implementation has largely negated the improved rights the policy promises.

Appeal to the Board

Restoring the possibility of appeal to the LSC Board is a great advance, but the current policy puts some restrictions on this right that are problematic. Employee can only appeal to the Board if they allege that a policy was violated or that procedures related to the grievance process were not followed correctly.

In September, an AFT member became the first employee to appeal a grievance to the Board under the new policy. With the assistance of the AFT's attorney, the employee could document both a violation of policy and an error in procedure.

However, the Board chose to implement a very narrow interpretation of the grievance policy and denied the employee a hearing. They interpreted "violation of policy" to mean that they would only consider violations of the grievance policy, not other policies. They interpreted "by a failure to follow procedures" to mean that they would only consider violations of procedures actually listed in the policy manual, not violations of the accompanying implementing procedures. The AFT believes interpreting the policy this narrowly will essentially block most appeals to the Board.

Although the merits of the specific case are important to the individual employee and have implications for other employees as well, the precedent this decision sets is at least as important.



If Lone Star College is to foster the open and fair culture we all desire, employees need the right to be heard before an objective party independent of the administration. Employees filing a grievance need to appeal through several levels of administration before reaching the Board. As these levels get higher and further away from the personalities involved in the case, the chance for objectivity improves, hopefully. However, under our current policy, the Board of Trustees is the only non-administrative entity available to consider the possibility that, perhaps, a decision may have been caught up in the group-think of expediency rather than an objective consideration of what is just.

AFT-Lone Star College urges the Board of Trustees to drop the restrictions currently in place that can block an employee's right to appeal to the Board. The few minutes that it would take for the Board to at least hear such a case and consider the evidence of all parties would help solidify the culture of transparency and fairness to which we aspire.

Representation

Thanks to the leadership of the current Board and administration, LSC Policy now clearly and unequivocally states in Section IV.F.10.07: "At all informal or formal grievance or appeal levels, the grievant and/or the administration may be represented, including by legal counsel, provided that the selected representative does not claim the right to strike."

This policy now provides employees with the right to representation promised to them by state law. The procedures that accompany this new policy add "representatives are there to assist their respective principal, not to question the other principal, or otherwise conduct the conference."

The AFT approves of this language and believes that its meaning is clear. A representative cross-examining the opposing principal may not be constructive. Also, it is grossly unfair for the representative of one side in a conflict to be the person in charge of conducting the conference.

However, in at least some of the hearings our members have been involved in so far, we believe that this procedure has been applied inappropriately. In some grievance hearings, the employee's representative has not been permitted to speak on behalf of the employee or to ask any questions at all. Helping the employee has been

limited to providing moral support or reminding the employee of points they should address.

Probably very few of the readers of this article are attorneys, but most of you have served on juries or been involved in a legal case yourself. You know what representation means. It would be a strange legal proceeding indeed if an attorney was not allowed to speak for his or her client. You know that the reason our society allows representation in hearings is that the plaintiff is often not versed in his or her legal rights and can face a disparity of power if the person on the other side has authority over the plaintiff. Our society rightly expects and demands that a representative be allowed to speak for the plaintiff.

Although our grievance hearings are not court proceedings, the issue is quite similar. Even at the first level of our process where we hope that open, informal dialog will resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level, most employees need someone to help them express their point of view. It is also the case that some of our employees have limited English language skills; they especially need help articulating their concerns.

Preventing a representative from speaking for an employee at all during a grievance hearing violates Board Policy and the accompanying procedures, as well as the spirit of state law. If an employee can only have a representative who sits silently through the meeting, that is little better than not being allowed a representative at all. Perhaps the procedures need to be clarified; perhaps administrators simply need better training in overseeing grievance hearings. The AFT respectfully asks the Board and the administration to clarify the role of a representative to ensure that employees have a fair chance to be heard.

Trust is one of the key premises of the new culture to which the Lone Star College community aspires. If you, as an employee, believe that a fair and open process is in place to help you appeal your case if you get that 8:00 AM summons from your supervisor, you may feel that you have good reason to trust that LSC has your best interest at heart. We appeal to the administration and the Board to make sure the implementation of the process matches the promise made in the policy manual.

John Burghduff
Professor of Math, LSC-CyFair



Volunteering and the 2016 LSC Board Election

Volunteering for LSC Board candidates can be remarkably rewarding. Volunteers learn invaluable lessons about civic life and develop meaningful friendships with like-minded volunteers. It is also a rewarding activity because, through this extraordinary avenue for shared governance, the LSC employees who work most closely with our students on a daily basis have gained more voice in the governance of LSC. The AFT believes that development is good for our students. For these reasons, we are happy to announce the outcome of the November 8, 2016, LSC Board elections.

As covered in the previous issue of *The Advocate*, LSC Board Districts 5, 6, and 7 were on the ballot. The election became final on Thursday, November 17 when it was canvassed. The results were crystal clear. In District 5, David Vogt won 61.31% of the vote; in District 6, Myriam Saldivar was uncontested; and in District 7, Linda Good won 68.42% of the vote.

Vogt has been a steady hand on the LSC Board since 1997. He has a reputation for integrity and for doing his homework before the meetings. The AFT is happy that LSC has retained Vogt's experience, seeing his reelection as a positive result.

LSC Trustee Art Murillo and State Representative Armando Walle recommended Saldivar to the AFT. Since Saldivar is a product of Aldine High School, LSC-North Harris, and the University of St. Thomas, AFT leadership believes she can not only relate to our students, but also inspire them by her current success as District Director for Walle. The AFT welcomes her back to LSC in her new capacity. We are excited to see a former student take a seat on the LSC Board.

The AFT endorsed Linda Good, whose campaign was amazing to watch. A corps of students, employees, friends, and family made donations, phone banked, block walked, stuffed envelopes, put out signs, and volunteered for two weeks at three of the seven early voting locations. On Election Day, volunteers managed to cover the ten busiest of the 43 precincts in District 7. Good also received positive press in *Community Impact News* and the *Conroe Courier*, which could have only helped the effort. With Good's proven ability to relate to LSC students and employees, we are delighted to see the unity that her campaign achieved for LSC and the

local community. The AFT believes that her nearly 28,000 votes demonstrate that District 7 voters have resoundingly endorsed LSC by decisively reelecting its most visible trustee.

The AFT wishes to encourage more people to get involved in this exciting activity. In November 2018, LSC Board Districts 1, 2, and 8 will be on the ballot. Soon, people will be able to donate to the AFT Lone Star Committee on Political Education through bank draft, maintaining the fund continuously. Employees can also help with campaign activities and should consider scheduling a day or two off during voting. We believe volunteers will find the effort rewarding as they make LSC more responsive to its students.

Staff

Love Trumps Hate

There are many factors that go into someone's decision about whom to vote for in an election. Sometimes a voter sees reasons to support a given candidate even in the face of negative qualities the candidate may have. The 2016 presidential election is now over. The American people have cast their ballots. Based on the rules of the Electoral College, as provided for in the Constitution, a new president has been chosen. As loyal citizens, we are bound to abide by that choice.

Usually, once election day has passed, we the people find a way to put aside the hoopla of the election and support the president elect. However, this election leaves many Americans with a sense of dread and worry. For the past year and a half, the president elect has built his candidacy around very harsh words aimed at many of our American brothers and sisters—immigrants, handicapped persons, Muslims, women, ethnic minorities, members of the press, and many others.

Words matter.

News channels showed the rage and even violence at campaign rallies for the president elect. Since the election, there have been incidents of minorities and opponents of the president elect being harassed or attacked on college campuses. The Southern Poverty Law Center has documented a stark rise in bullying behavior in public schools.¹



Like us, our students are worried: Will we or our loved ones be deported? Will relatives coming to visit from other countries be blocked because of their religion? Will sexual assault now be considered OK? Will the hard earned right to marry whomever we love be taken away?

If there is a silver lining to this divisive election, it is that Americans are emboldened to speak up for each other. On Monday, November 14, at Lone Star College-CyFair, a sizeable group of at least 60 students and faculty members conducted a silent and peaceful march around the college lake, not to advocate for overturning the election, but to call for the protection of all Americans under the new administration.

Whatever our opinions may be about trade policies, taxation, corporate regulations or any other issue that influenced our vote, let us unite in supporting the rights and the dignity of all of our students and all of our employees.

Dr. Blake Ellis, history professor at Lone Star College-CyFair, has composed a declaration that a growing number of employees are posting on their office doors to affirm our solidarity with our students. We include this declaration below. Dr. Ellis has given everyone permission to use these words:

To my undocumented students: in my classroom, there are no walls.

To my Muslim students: I will fight Islamophobia with you.

To my black students: Your lives matter to me. Always.

To my LGBTQ students: Your rights matter to me.

To my female students: Men do not have the right to grab you whenever they choose.

To my immigrant students: Our country is better because you are here.

In this office, LOVE TRUMPS HATE.

John Burghdoff
Professor of Math, LSC-CyFair

¹. <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/04/13/splc-survey-presidential-campaign-leading-widespreadfear-bullying-schools>

Dr. Allen Vogt

“And gladly would he learn and gladly teach”

—Chaucer’s description of the Clerk in the “Prologue”
to *The Canterbury Tales*

Allen Vogt, my longtime friend and AFT-Lone Star College Treasurer for thirty plus years, is retiring at the end of this semester. Waves of various emotions wash over me as I contemplate his departure.

Quiet and unassuming, Allen is one of the best teachers that I have ever known. He absolutely dazzles his students with history. A number of students in my classes have been in Allen’s classes, and they have nothing but praise for his ability to engage them in history. He is also recognized for his presentations on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. I have attended several of these events, always to a full house of interested students, employees, and community members. His objective analysis never fails to captivate his audience. His dedication to his subject is reflected one of his favorite quotations: “History, if properly taught, is irresistible.”

Beyond his dedication to the classroom, Allen has been a steady and loyal AFT officer who has made sure that the union’s books are in impeccable shape. When important issues were before the LSC’s Board of Trustees and the union wanted members to attend, we could always count on Allen to be there. Additionally, he has

written powerfully on issues of social justice in the union’s newsletter, *The Advocate*.

We wish Dr. Vogt a long and adventurous retirement.

Alan Hall



Tales from the Unionside

Personal threats, public bullying, rigged elections, voter suppression, dark money, and dirty tricks.... Sounds like 2016 with Lying Ted, Crooked Hillary, Little Marco, and the Demagogue Donald casting their evil ways over American democracy. You may be thinking



of 2016, but I am thinking back to the 1980s when politics North Harris style was all those things and more.

It is a little-known fact that North Harris County College made history in 1980 as the only college in America where a faculty member was barred from speaking for the re-election of the President of the United States. This incident happened at a campus event when outside speakers from the Republican and Democratic parties were invited to NHCC to present their cases for Governor Ronald Reagan and President Jimmy Carter to students and the public.

With the program about to begin, a number of students rushed to political science instructor Kevin Bailey's office to let him know that the Carter speaker was nowhere to be found. After students asked him to stand in for the AWOL Democratic representative, Kevin told me that he felt ill prepared to do so as he clearly would look bad in comparison to a polished Reagan speaker. Kevin Bailey felt he would have to take one for the Carter team.

After about ten minutes, a dejected instructor returned to the political science office area, and I asked my colleague how well it went. Bailey said that President Bill Thorne cornered him on his way to speak with a chilling message of the serious consequences that could occur should he speak at the campaign forum. Kevin felt guilty about standing down, but we learned a valuable lesson about W. W. and his use of personal threats resulting in no one addressing the campus gathering on behalf of President Carter.

Public bullying reared its ugly head during one of the North Harris trustee elections in the early 1980s. Trustee Brad York confronted Carolyn Davis, a political science instructor, at a Kingwood polling place where she was handing out flyers for an AFT-backed candidate. After finding out that Carolyn was a union member, Mr. York told her that if she wanted a union she should join the Teamsters and drive a truck. He went on to let her know that he could make her life miserable in the future.

The charge of a rigged election is a standard complaint heard these days, but in the 1980s getting a fair election shake was not easy. Back then, our elections were run by the local school districts and the college in January of odd-numbered years. Educational administrators were responsible for everything from candidate filings to counting votes to certifying the election results. In

some cases, the temptations may have been too great not to tip the scales in a particular way.

In 1981, the AFT recruited Professor David Robinson and Dr. James Francis to run for the NHCC board against two of Bill Thorne's political cronies. Robinson sailed through the process and became the first trustee elected not hand-picked by the Thorne crowd. It was the Francis candidacy that showed establishment power working against an outside challenger. There was always some uncertainty about the eligibility of Dr. Francis to run for office. Francis lived in a townhouse at the edge of the Aldine and Houston school districts. Despite all his efforts to get clarification, no answer was given to him about whether he resided in AISD or HISD. Dr. Francis went forward with his filing application and paid the election fee. Just weeks before the end of filing, Mr. Thorne called Dr. Francis to tell him that he was ineligible to run for our board as he did not live in Aldine.

Getting people out to vote is never easy, but imagine how difficult it was to convince voters to show up on a Saturday in January to cast a ballot in a nonpartisan school board race. This was not an easy task, and when you add in the fear factor, nonvoting was the result. I lived in Aldine for 17 years and voted with my wife at Shotwell Middle School. It used to be a standing joke with election officials that here comes this young couple again to vote at Shotwell. The Shotwell turnout was in the tens each election as few people showed up to vote. With a secret ballot, government officials know who voted from the sign-in sheets, but not who voted for whom in the election. When the Shotwell totals were tabulated, it could be ascertained that this young couple probably had not voted for the Aldine incumbents as the numbers were so one-sided in favor of the school administration picks, with only a few stray votes for challengers.

As I got more involved in the Aldine community as a civic club president, Little League coach, and church member, I found out the fear Aldine teachers felt about voting in a school board election. Administrators would call teachers together and tell them how to vote, and that they (administrators) would be monitoring polling places on Election Day to check on turnout numbers and voters' names to insure "fairness" for all. The safest action for teachers was to stay away from the polls on Saturday, or there could be big trouble on Monday at school if the wrong candidates won. In Aldine, low turnout kept administrators healthy and well, while



teachers could breathe a sigh of relief that they were making no waves or causing no problems for the higher-ups.

Without an Ethics Commission, the 1980s were a time of dark money and backroom dealing. Campaign spending reports were hard to monitor as the records were kept with the school districts. Union money for AFT candidates was contributed individually and was reported on campaign-spending reports which were open to review by administrators. This situation was unsettling for some AFT members who worried that college officials would find out their names and would, therefore, not pass on any bucks to our endorsed candidates. It took the AFT a number of years to find out that the college district bond attorney was the biggest contributor to W. W. Thorne's trustee slate.

It was clear that the union candidates were outspent in every election in the 1980's as lawyers, architects, engineers, and construction company owners loved the old Thorne board and its commitment to buildings over books. In 1983, the AFT and one of its endorsed candidates tried to reach out to the African-American community of Acre Homes for political support. Aldine Attorney Gaylen Nix, an active Democrat, asked me to go along to a meeting at a private home of a black political leader where Nix and I were the only whites present. I spoke on behalf of Gaylen and Ron Brandt, the union-backed candidates, to a group of thirty or more.

After I spoke, Nix asked me to leave the meeting and wait outside as he wanted to talk to the group alone. About twenty minutes later, Gaylen came outside, and I asked him how he felt the meeting went. Nix said he felt the group was receptive to his candidacy up to a point; the sticking point was money. Several community leaders asked about walk-around-money that would be needed to get out the vote. Our candidate had no money to give and went down to defeat in 1983 as there were more people at a Friday night meeting asking for dollars than would show up at the local polling place on election day to cast a ballot.

During the 1980s, dirty tricks were played on political science instructor Larry Shirts, a Democratic Party activist. Shirts, an eternal optimist, convinced the Harris County Democratic Party to fund a storefront office in the 1960 area for a November election. This was a "bold" move as NHCC and the surrounding areas were white, conservative, and Republican. Everyone knew this in the party, but Larry, the son of a minister, felt that

the Democrats should establish an outpost on foreign soil. It was a missionary effort at best and a fool's errand at worst as the locals were in no conversion mood: the Westfield by the Railroad office was broken into on a Saturday night, and vandals trashed the place and put spray paint all over the walls.

While 2016 national campaign politics was a public embarrassment and not worthy of a democratic system, we can applaud the actions of Linda Good and Ron Trowbridge in the District 7 Lone Star College election. Both Good and Trowbridge ran positive campaigns devoid of personal attacks and negative statements. It was uplifting to see Ron and Linda distinguish themselves as persons of conscience and ethics as opposed to the disgraceful duo of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Bob Locander

Professor of Political Science, LSC-North Harris

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



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



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
- To maintain and promote the aims of the American Federation of Teachers and other affiliated labor bodies

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
 - AFT research facilities
 - Leadership Training
- Savings and discounts on goods and services with AFT PLUS Benefits
- Free \$5,000 term life insurance policy for first year of membership

Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$40.00
Full-time Professional Staff	\$28.60
Full-time Support Staff	\$25.88
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$14.00

Membership Eligibility

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

www.aftlonestar.org

American Federation of Teachers - Lone Star College Membership Application

AFT-Lone Star College is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Texas AFT and accepts membership from all non-supervisory employees of the Lonestar College System. Indicate below whether you are a new member or a current member wishing to update your contact information. Membership with AFT-Lone Star College provides each member with an \$8 million Professional Occupational Liability coverage policy, legal defense coverage and access to representation for work-related issues. In addition, AFT-Lone Star College members are entitled to special savings and discounts through our AFT PLUS benefits program. **If you have questions about joining, please call AFT- Lone Star College @ 281-889-1009. You may also visit our website: www.aftlonestar.org**

- 1) Fill out the application below and choose your method of payment
- 2) Remit this application to AFT-Lone Star College President, Alan Hall

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



2016-2017 Monthly Membership Dues rates:
Based on your position with the Lonestar College System, please select your appropriate dues rate.

Full-time Faculty \$40.00/mo. or \$480.00/yr.
 Full-time Professional Staff \$28.60/mo. or \$343.20/yr.
 Full-time Support Staff \$25.88/mo. or \$310.56/yr.
 Adjunct Faculty \$14.00/mo. or \$168.00/yr.
 Part-time Staff \$14.00/mo. or \$168.00/yr.



IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Payroll deduction allows members to pay union dues in monthly installments. If you prefer to write a check to pay for your union dues, be advised that AFT requires the full yearly amount payable in 2 six-month installments. Exceptions to the rule apply for Part-time Staff and Adjunct Faculty only.

First Name: **Middle Initial:** **Last Name:**

Home Address:

City: **State:** **Zip code:**

Home Phone: **Email Address:**

Employee ID #: **Campus:**

Position: **Room #:** **Referred by:**

I am paid: Bi-weekly Semi-monthly **Paid over:** 9 months 9.5 months 12 months

Are you a current or new member? **Current member** (Updating information and/or payment method) **New Member**

Choose method of payment: **Payroll Deduction** (Complete the union dues agreement below) **Personal Check** (YOU MUST PAY 6 MONTHS AT A TIME)

Union Dues Deduction Agreement

I hereby authorize Lone Star College System to deduct each pay period an amount equal to the dues in the amounts fixed in accordance with the Bylaws of AFT including any increase in dues in future years and pay same to said Union in accordance with the terms of the agreement between Lone Star College System and American Federation of Teachers. This agreement will remain in effect until Lone Star College System receives a written notice of cancellation from me, AFT or at the time of my termination, whichever occurs first. This authorization is subject to sufficient wages being available to comply with all other required deductions and existing federal and state laws.

Signature: (Print this form and sign here) **Date** [Click here to print form](#)

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

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



The Advocate



P.O. Box 788 Spring, Texas 77383-0788

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 **Katie Hurter, Editor** via e-mail: katie.hurter@lonestar.edu, or submit to any of the following officers.

Alan Hall, President	North Harris	ACAD 217-G	281-618-5544
Stephen King	North Harris	ACAD 162-H	281-618-5530
Allen Vogt	North Harris	ACAD 264-C	281-618-5583
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood	FTC 100-G	281-312-1656
Laura Codner	Kingwood	CLA 110-D	281-312- 414
Catherine Olson	Tomball	S 153 -H	281-357-3776
Richard Becker	Tomball	E 271-D	281-401-1835
Janet Moore	Tomball	E 210 -E	281-401-1871
Van Piercy	Tomball	S 153-J	281-401-1814
Martina Kusi-Mensah	Montgomery	G 121-J	936-273-7276
Louise Casey-Clukey	Montgomery	B 100-G	936-273-7394
John Burghduff	Cy-Fair	HSC 250-G	281-290-3915
Cindy Hoffart-Watson	Cy-Fair	LRNC 101-C	281-290-3265
Kathy Hughes	Fairbanks	FBC 218-A	832-782-5063
Earl Brewer	Fairbanks	S - 13	832-782-5029
Dave Gaer	University Park	UP - 134	281-290-2663

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 pro-

vided some advice on how to proceed with their situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available.

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

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values

of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice in their professional lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, AFT is there for them.

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

—Alan Hall