



# EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery  
Community College District

2700 W. W. Thorne • Suite A-217 • Houston, Texas 77073



## THE ADVOCATE

OCTOBER, 1995

### An Issue of Fairness

In the last few months, the union has stirred discussion of treatment of adjuncts at the college. Adjunct faculty who teach more than half time are now being appropriately compensated. An adjunct teaching over half time is paid the adjunct rate for each of the courses, plus \$250 for each contact hour over the limit. For instance, an adjunct English instructor teaching three courses receives the adjunct rate for each course plus \$750. In addition, the college makes the same percentage contribution to retirement as it makes for full-time faculty and provides medical benefits. The law requires that, if this individual teaches even one course in the Spring, the benefits will continue through May, 1996.

I heard some rumblings from several areas of the college that recent administrative discussions of the adjunct situation included consideration of not hiring these adjuncts back in the Spring in order to save the district the money required to supply these benefits. I heard this topic mentioned often enough to be concerned. I recently visited with Dr. Bill Richards, Vice-President of Educational Programming at NHC. He, too, had heard the rumor a number of times and says of it, "Absolutely not true. The college will do the right thing for adjunct faculty." In light of the college's track record with adjuncts and this issue, Dr. Richards' resolve is reassuring. Refusal to bring these adjuncts back in the Spring would be a great disservice to them. Several of them are long-standing employees who took on extra classes because the college needed them.. To be forced to forfeit employment next semester would be hugely unfair and create an economic burden on them. Moreover, such a move would be an enormous disservice to students. I know a number of these adjuncts, and they are fine teachers. To deprive students of these teachers would not fit the college's commitment to quality instruction. Let us hope Dr. Richards' resolve is a solidly held attitude throughout the district.

Alan Hall, President

### More on Adjuncts

Adjunct faculty in higher education, better known in the media as "freeway flyers" or "scholar gypsies," have been the focus of much attention on the national, state,

*"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"*

and local levels. Certainly, they have been the focus of discussion here in our college district.

The October 1995 issue of On Campus, the American Federation of Teachers' national higher education newsletter, reported a dramatic increase of part-timers in higher education:

According to the National Center for Education Statistic's 1993 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty, in that year (the most recent for which data are available) there were 899,000 college instructors of whom more than one-third (304,000) worked part time. In different types of institutions, the reliance on part-timers varies--from 55 percent of all faculty at community colleges, to 12 percent at public research universities.

In *Part-Time Faculty Issues*, a report published last year by the AFT, deputy higher education director Perry Robinson traces the surge in part-time faculty use over the past decades. Between 1971 and 1986, he reports, "the full-time contingent had grown from 379,000 to 459,000, a gain of 22 percent, while the part-time instructional force had vaulted from 113,000 to 263,000, an increase of 133 percent. (9)

For many colleges, the increased use of adjuncts is a trend driven by economics rather than by academics. However, Judith Gappa and David Leslie, authors of The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-Timers in Higher Education, point out the academic losses:

Full-time faculty are "drawn away from their teaching assignments to handle advising, curriculum development, and program coordination, if these functions are handled at all." Bureaucratic burdens increase.

Furthermore, they ask, what is the effect of governance when large numbers of faculty are unavailable for or excluded from committee and departmental deliberations? It "leaves the remaining full-time faculty and the institution's administration with the distinct feeling that there is not a sufficient and definable core of people devoted to institutional maintenance and improvement. It also leaves part-timers disconnected from the mission and the spirit of the institution." (On Campus 12)

The union here at the college supports increasing the number of full-time faculty, many who would be hired from the ranks of our part-timers. We also support better working conditions for our adjuncts. The October On Campus notes the issues that are universal to adjuncts: "adequate pay, guarantees for continuing work, preference for full-time work, more respect and integration into the academic life of the institution" (9). It is time for the college to direct more attention to the needs of adjuncts. The 5% pay increase for this year was a laudable step in the right direction. It was, however, just one step. Many more steps remain necessary.

Perhaps we need to establish an adjunct system similar to the continuing contract system for full-time faculty, whereby adjuncts who have proven themselves semester after semester go into a pool which is offered classes first among adjuncts. We should be more aggressive in creating opportunities for inclusion of adjuncts in our meetings and daily operations.

If you are an adjunct, the union can highlight and advocate on behalf of your needs. However, much of the responsibility lies with you. Let us know your concerns; write to The Advocate; join the union. A collective, unified voice can facilitate change.

Alan Hall

## **The National AFT'S Position on Part-Timers**

The AFT Task Force on Part-Time Faculty has made recommendations to the national union regarding part-time issues. They include the following:

1. Part-time faculty should be included in the same union as full-time faculty whenever possible.
2. Part-time faculty should be eligible for tenure.
3. Part-time faculty should be paid on salary schedules with increments based on experience.
4. Part-time faculty should receive the health care plan coverage they need, whatever their workload.
5. Whether or not part-time faculty have tenure, their academic freedom should be guaranteed with contract provisions that include evaluation and grievance procedure.
6. Part-time faculty should be welcomed to participate in departmental meetings. If participation is required, they should be paid for their time.
7. Part-time faculty should be integrated into the life of the institution by the full-time faculty and department chairs.

## **Letters to the Editor**

Typically, The Advocate prints signed letters. However, occasionally individuals write to us raising significant points, but fear retaliation from the college and do not want their names printed. The two letters below fall into this category.

I am writing this letter to address your article in The Advocate for September, 1995 regarding workloads. While I applaud the union's efforts to make all employment

practices fair within the district, you failed to realize some of the implications of crackdown against adjuncts working three or more classes without benefits.

First, most adjunct professors are working as teachers part-time because they enjoy teaching and have direct experience in the related field in the private industry. While self-satisfaction and pay are enough rewards for the adjunct professor, they still must make a minimum to keep teaching. Many Adjunct Professors do not need the benefits and through personal experience have discovered three courses to be a minimum acceptable level of pay to continue teaching. The union's crackdown of a new policy to enforce Adjuncts only being able to teach two credit courses caused the loss of several fine instructors, who had no choice but to go back to private industry for financial reasons. This hurt the colleges and the students, who had no longer had teachers with direct private industry experience. Full-time teachers are great within the district, but sometimes, let's admit, they do lose touch with what is happening outside the college environment.

Second, although your policy was supposed to create more full-time positions at each college, it had the opposite effect. To comply with your policies the separate colleges cut classes. Very few extra full-time positions were created and actually hired. If they did NOT cut classes offered, they, instead, hired MORE Adjuncts to teach courses, since the existing Adjuncts could now only teach two courses. I don't think this is what the union intended.

Third, if overtime and compensation is such an issue, with even workloads critical throughout the district, why are Montgomery professors teaching 24 units a week without getting more salary, when Tomball teachers are only teaching 20 units a week for the same pay rate? Is this fair? Where is the union?

If the union wants more support and membership, then it is only fair they address some of the critical concerns of both adjunct and full-time professors.

Name withheld for obvious reasons

**Editor's Note:** Regrettably, some adjuncts did suffer this semester. However, the union did not create a new policy. The policies belong to the college district. We did advocate that adjuncts be treated fairly in compliance with Board policy and the law. The administrative decision this semester regarding adjunct loads was made too late to enable the college to hire more full-time faculty, which was our stated goal. We would anticipate more full-time hires shortly.

Central to all of this discussion is the definition of a full-time workload. Federation President, Alan Hall, is on a committee with faculty Senate Presidents to look at workload.

I would like to know why medical insurance is not offered as a choice to adjunct professors? It would seem the union is concerned with fair treatment of benefits applied to all employees within the district. As the situation exists today, adjunct Professors are treated as second class citizens compared to full-time instructors.



We have lower pay, no benefits, yet teach the same courses. We apply our industry experience towards our courses, since many of us work other jobs in the private industry, so in some cases we offer more to our students than many full-time professors, but we get treated worse. I am asking the union to fight for the adjuncts, to get us some benefits.

Medical insurance, even if paid by the adjuncts themselves, would be a first step towards promoting why adjuncts should join the union. What, at this point, does the union do for adjuncts? Ask yourself that question, and then wonder why your membership does not increase. New adjuncts would be more willing to pay union dues if they could see the direct benefits of doing so!!

Name withheld

**Editor's Note:** Four issues of The Advocate in the last year have included adjunct concerns. We are focusing on topics of interest to you. Our membership is growing. We could do more if you would join.

## **UNION PRIVILEGE**

One of the advantages of Union membership is access to Union Privilege Discounts programs. With Union Member Discounts, members save money on everything from music to car rentals to hearing care and more. Among the program's many discount offerings:

### **UNION PRIVILEGE HEALTH NEEDS SERVICES**

Significant savings/discounts on Prescription Drugs compared to typical neighborhood pharmacies, The Union Shopper Prescription Drug Program offers members, family, and relatives savings at participating pharmacies displaying the "PAID" sign (Recommended for members who take a medication regularly, especially if the member has no prescription plan with health insurance)

Also, savings/discounts on mail-order prescriptions, the member may call an 800 number to comparison-shop. Postage-paid, mail-service delivery is made within two weeks.

Free refill reminders

Licensed pharmacists check prescriptions

### **AFT HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS**

**Group Hospital Insurance** - Up to \$115 daily coverage for member and relatives while in the hospital, with double benefits for cancer treatment. Over and above any other insurance member receives

**Group Cancer Insurance** - Up to \$250,000 in lifetime benefits for each family member

**Catastrophic Major Medical** - Picks up 100% of medical costs where the member's basic health insurance leaves off. \$2,000,000 in benefits! Covers extensive nursing home and home health care benefits.

## **New Editor**

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Olin Joynton as the new editor of *The Advocate*.

## **JOIN THE AFT!**

The Employee Federation welcomes the new employees of NHMCCD. For nearly fifteen years, this local of the American Federation of Teachers has led the fight to make this a better place to work and teach. No other organization or publication at NHMCCD takes our kind of independent, critical approach to District affairs. If you agree with our perspective, show your solidarity by becoming a member. All faculty and staff are eligible. Monthly dues rates are \$20.75 for full-time faculty, \$13.60 for full-time staff and adjunct faculty, and \$10.50 for part-time staff. Discuss membership with **Alan Hall**, District President (443-5544, 353-8634) or any other member (Tony Foster, Bob Locander, Mel McFadden, Greg Mitchell, Patricia Plunk, Velma Smith, Allen Vogt, Steve Davis) of the Federation Executive Committee. Also, please consider writing for this publication. Send submissions to the Editor, Steve Davis, at Kingwood College.