



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery

Community College District

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

THE ADVOCATE

JULY 1995

SPECIAL EDITION



EDITOR'S NOTE:

A recent decision that coordinators may not teach an overload has prompted a strong reaction, including the possibility of mass resignations by coordinators from their positions. The decision appears to be a poor one and goes against a declared administrative effort to avoid major decisions in the summer while many faculty are gone. The decision is due to take effect in September, hence this special edition of The Advocate.

A Response to Coordinator Policy Changes Don Stanley, Psychology Coordinator, NHC

I was recently informed by my division head that a decision had been made to revise the criteria for program coordinators and to no longer allow coordinators to teach overloads. Who made this decision and why it was made currently remains a mystery.

I find several problems with this change in "policy." First, it will provide me with a significant pay cut if I decide to continue serving as program coordinator. The current policy states that coordinator pay will not be tied to adjunct faculty pay scales; however the semester pay scale is the same pay scale for adjunct pay and overload pay. The proposed payment is a semester stipend to be paid each semester, the same payment that was previously used. However, coordinator duties last for a 12 month period. Summer classes must be scheduled, books must be ordered, and adjunct faculty must be interviewed, recommended for hiring, etc. These duties are not confined to Fall and Spring semesters. Why then is there no "stipend" given for the summer?

Am I to believe that coordinator duties are now so overwhelming that teaching an overload will require too much time and will interfere with my coordinating duties? Why then have I successfully been teaching overloads and serving as coordinator for the last 10 years or so? Moreover, if the coordinator position is now going to be so demanding, why am I not being financially compensated for this increase in duties and responsibilities? The new proposal offers no increase in financial rewards for serving as a program coordinator, but instead denies me the opportunity to teach, which is my primary responsibility at NHC.

This change in policy will not save the college any significant amount of money. An adjunct faculty member will now be paid to teach the course I normally would have

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a number of staff salaries more competitive. He anticipates completion of this project by July of 1997. This move is long overdue, and the union strongly supports it.

As with any new program, both of these compensation systems will have problems and inequities. It is incumbent upon us as employees to monitor these new plans and address issues as they arise so that they may be corrected. The union has an excellent track record in this arena. Let us know your thoughts as we move toward implementation.

I was favorably impressed with Dr. Pickelman's candor and willingness to entertain alternative, sometimes opposing, points of view on different topics. I anticipate continued progress in future meetings.

ALAN HALL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you for your support and encouragement during the past year. As president of AFT/NHMCCD, you have provided wise counsel and objective evaluation of stressful situations in the workplace. Your straight-forward honesty is greatly needed in a growing, changing district. Your commitment to finding positive solutions in difficult situations represents values which you and AFT hold up to the district. AFT's presence in the district provides a much needed check and balance for power and an accountability for employer/employee relationships. It is my opinion that AFT is the only organization in the system which provides for faculty/staff advocacy, administrative accountability and objective conflict resolution. AFT is a part of the system, but it is not controlled by the system; therefore, it offers a very high level of accountability for the system. In working through some of the situations in which I found myself this year, I have valued the willingness of AFT to search for solutions instead of seeking to place blame. I think that management would call that "win/win." I call it good sense.

Why did I join AFT? I realized that some of the individuals I have most respected over the past 15 years, those people who hold up excellence as an attainable goal and those people who practice servant leadership are also longtime members of AFT. I realized that there are some situations which cannot be resolved by two people talking face to face, particularly if one individual has more authority and power than the other. I realized that there is a need for an external organization which can hold a system accountable for the way it treats individuals and for the manner in which our product, education, is delivered. For the most part, educators are visionaries and idealists. That includes administrators as well as faculty and staff. We tend to hold the vision in front of us, sometimes to the detriment of individual dignity in the workplace. AFT has proven itself to be a positive, cooperative force throughout the district and has consistently worked to hold individual dignity as a value to be cherished.

Again, thank you for your support this past year. I am grateful to be a part of NHMCCD and to be a member of AFT. Together we can make a difference in the lives we touch.

MARY ELLA PHELPS
TC

It is not my job to know how the computer system runs. The tech responses were technically correct in that regard. However, they were as accurate as they were irrelevant. I know a dead parrot when I see one.

They all took the time to defend HP. They didn't take the time to explain why the system shut down when it did, or how they are working to avoid this from happening again. My information regarding the problems with HP, registration, etc. all came from, guess who, techs. Techs who watched it go down, who have talked to the HP repairmen. They came to me with their horror stories. I tend to believe them.

What was most disturbing is, when given the opportunity to reassure the faculty that they know what they're doing, and that the past failures will not recur, they instead opted to cover their own asses. They seized on my little throwaway point on Compaq to defend HP, missing the point entirely. It was almost like that Monty Python sketch where the parrot is obviously dead, but the pet store owner denies it.

I was heartened to hear that, except for a nasty hard-drive crash, things have gone quite well. How was your plane trip honey? Great-except for that crash.

It was also welcome advice to load and store everything on your C drive just in case. This is exactly the way things were done before the network came along, which was my main point in ripping the computer system in the first place! Store everything on the C drive reminds me of that line from Apocalypse Now, "Don't get out of the boat."

The network is more of an aid to administration than to teaching. Computers are an aid to both. Relying on the network being up can only hurt and not help instruction. If it's up, it allows you to do the same things you could do without it (boot up programs, print). When its down-you're down. Wanna print up a test? Can't-system's down. Would you like to see your grades on my spreadsheet? Can't-system's down. Wanna write up a test-can't. All those things you can do if you do not use the network, if you load everything on C. But-you still cannot print, and you cannot register students.

Is that technically clear enough? As President Bush would say, Computers-good, network-irrelevant.

TIM HOWARD
NHC

Why join the AFT in an institution of higher education such as the one we have the honor to work in? Things are changing. They are changing in workplaces and that includes NHMCCD. This is not a "good ol' boy" institution anymore. This is a place of business. We serve the community; and the "bottom line" is always being viewed and discussed. Many employees feel they are kept in the dark. Could we go so far as to say they are fearful? Of what-- losing their jobs, being uncomfortably squeezed? Whatever the reason, be it ever so personal, employees need something to hold on to. Thus, enter the AFT; they will let you hold on. They listen, they advise, they will provide information, and they will legally act in your interest.

I am not a confrontational person--so you will see no dragon fire coming from me. I believe only in fairness to all, no matter what your position or income. I am now a part of the AFT, to listen, advise, inform, or hold your hand. And I am, let me say that again, I am, the very same person I was before joining. So don't be afraid, don't throw stones. Just continue to be my friend and colleague. However, if any of you do wish to cast a few stones in my direction, I am here to listen.

VELMA TRAMMELL
DISTRICT PRESIDENT FOR THE STAFF CHAPTER

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, Patricia Plunk, Velma Smith, Allen Vogt, Steve Davis) of the Federation Executive Committee. Also, please consider writing for this publication.