



# EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery  
Community College District

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## ***THE ADVOCATE***

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Edited by Olin Joynton

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### **A Job Well Done**

After registering for classes at the Carver Center one evening at the beginning of this semester, a student began to feel dizzy as she returned to her car in the parking lot. Once in the car, she passed out. Officer Gary Paradoski, who was on duty that evening, spotted the student and acted immediately. He awakened the student, assessed her situation and determined that an ambulance needed to be summoned. While they were waiting, the student began to feel better and indicated her intent to leave. Officer Paradoski convinced her to wait on the ambulance crew to check her over just to be safe. The paramedics discovered that the student was experiencing an irregular heartbeat, causing the dizziness, and they transported her to the hospital for overnight observation.

All college locations depend of our police officers for quick and appropriate response. Officer Paradoski handled this one efficiently and effectively. The union salutes him on his professional response.

-- Alan Hall

### **Ethics in the Workplace: Collegiality**

*The first of a series intended to show the union's commitment to ethics in the workplace. Your letters and suggestions for future topics are welcome.*

In his essay "Collegiality as a Professional Virtue," Craig K. Ihara defines collegiality as "a kind of connectedness grounded in respect for professional expertise and in a commitment to the goals and values of the profession." He adds that collegiality "includes a disposition to support and cooperate with one's colleagues."

For us in the NHMCCD district, the connectedness mentioned in this definition arises primarily from our common mission of educating our students in the best manner possible. How can we *not* feel connected to the professor who preserves the highest academic standards along with the encouragement and resources to meet those standards? To the staff member who gives students prompt, courteous, and informed attention when they register for courses or apply for financial aid? To the counselor who doesn't give up on students whose process of deciding on a major seems interminable? To the custodian who goes the extra mile in maintaining the physical plant so that conditions are optimal for learning? To the administrator who listens with sensitivity and truly incorporates the perspectives of those affected by his or her decisions? To the police officer who makes sure that students feel secure while on campus?

*"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"*

## **Collegiality (cont.)**

These instances point out that we function as a community. The services that any one of us provides would be relatively worthless without those of the others. The attitude of collegiality should flow naturally from the recognition of this truth. When it doesn't, there is usually some problem in the workplace which compromises our ability to have "respect for the professional expertise" of our colleagues. The rosy examples cited are unfortunately not always the norm, and sometimes it seems that collegiality is honored more in the breach than in the observance. What, then, is the collegial person's response to the professor who won't maintain standards or lend encouragement to students? To the dismissive or uninformed staff member, and so on?

The beginning of an answer lies in Ibara's two arguments supporting collegiality as a moral virtue appropriate to the workplace. First, he reasons that collegiality enables workers to serve the public good because it strengthens their motivations at work. It does this by creating an environment that supports mutual endeavors, enlivens shared commitments, and encourages responsible work. Thus, when a collegial person doubts a colleague's expertise, the right questions begin with What will serve the public good? What will support our mutual endeavors? The right response--be it assistance, toleration, or confrontation--needs to be based on thoughtful answers to these questions.

Second, Ibara argues that collegiality contributes to making work inherently worthwhile for those who engage in it. Though one of my colleagues jokingly refers to the college as "the smarts factory" and compares his job to that of an assembly line worker, our business is much more than just mindlessly turning out products. It could easily seem that way however, to someone who took no interest in being collegial. A pattern of cynical, bitter, or apathetic responses to those who test our respect could easily turn work into a meaningless and alienating exercise. Who would want to achieve that outcome for him/herself?

In a recent meeting with some faculty Dr. Pickelman stated that he fully regards faculty as colleagues. When the virtue of collegiality is conveyed from the leadership, we can do no less than reciprocate. Being an active union member, incidentally, is for many in our district a satisfying way of expressing the spirit of collegiality.

I'd like to start some dialogue on the functioning of collegiality within our district--both in the easy cases and in the hard cases. How about sending me reflections on your experience with this virtue? Tell me whether it's OK to print what you submit, anonymously or with your name attached.

--Olin Joynton.

## **Union Privilege**

Need a loan to pay 1995 taxes--or for any other reason?

The American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO have joined in a program to provide active or retired members with a source of ready cash at rates below those usually charged by lending companies.

Available in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$10,000, these unsecured personal loans, offered through NationsBank, can be disbursed within a week or less.

Interested? Ask your union representatives for additional information.

--Velma Smith

## **Why I joined the AFT**

After more than 15 years at North Harris College I decided to join the AFT. Since it took a relatively lengthy period of time to arrive at this decision, I was asked to write a brief article for the newsletter discussing my rationale. Some may label my view deluded, distorted, or even demented, but I'll share it anyway. My grandmother taught me to be an optimist!

I remember talking with Bob Locander about the "union" shortly after arriving at North Harris. At that time, he stated that I couldn't sit on the fence for long, but that I would at some time have to make a decision regarding the union. I had never been a "union" person, primarily because I perceived the relationship between unions and employers as being characterized by conflict and adversity. After a three year search for a relatively permanent teaching position, I had no conflicts or complaints. I was simply thankful to be teaching somewhere.

Fifteen years later, I'm still thankful to be teaching, but I feel the relationship between the union and the administration has changed. I fully believe that employees and employers can work in unison to strive towards a better organization. It requires an amount of good faith and trust on both sides to strive towards a cooperative effort. At this point in time, I feel that good faith and trust exists to a greater extent than what has existed in the past. I wanted to be a part of that effort, and to participate in the camaraderie that I perceive present within the AFT membership.

In the past I have served as president of the Faculty Senate, and a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for many years. I feel their efforts are commendable, but am frustrated and saddened by the lack of faculty support for that organization. I still hear a great deal of cynicism from some faculty with respect to the prospect of working cooperatively with administration to solve existing problems, and I can understand the roots of that cynicism. But, I feel the atmosphere has changed within the college district. In the union, I find a good number of individuals who believe that they can make a difference, and who strive to work constructively to bring about positive change. I also like the neat lapel pins, and Alan Hall said that his life would be complete if I joined the AFT. With an opportunity to profoundly impact another's life experience, who could refuse! Also, I was the only member of my once a month poker group who was not a member of the AFT. I could no longer tolerate the pressure to join!

Many years ago, I had small cards printed up to give to those individuals involved in the Faculty Senate. Essentially, they were "Right To Bitch" cards: BITCH standing for Better Institutions Through Creative Help. I sincerely feel that you only have the right to complain if you are a part of the ongoing effort to bring about growth and change. I feel that faculty, staff, and the administration can work cooperatively and effectively towards that end, and I believe that these are the goals of the AFT.

I feel we have an excellent college with top notch staff and faculty. I feel we provide an important and valuable service to the community and to our students. I'm happy to be a part of that effort. Improvement is always possible, and there are many factors bringing about changes within the college district. Those changes will impact all of us and hopefully a united faculty and staff effort can impact the direction of that change.

--Don Stanley