



# EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery  
Community College District

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



## THE ADVOCATE

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER  
1996

### Closing the Gap

Dr. Pickelman has been on the road of late traveling around the district and appearing before faculty and staff groups. He typically offers some remarks on topics of interest and then answers questions --- some submitted in advance in written form and others from the floor. He appeared before the faculty a NHC recently, and, as it often does, the issue of faculty compensation arose. Dr. Pickelman made his usual case that faculty in the district are well compensated and compare favorably to other two year colleges in the state. He reiterated his commitment to ensure that faculty do not lose buying power in the face of inflation, noting the salary increases since he joined the district. It is true that since Dr. Pickelman has been with the district faculty have maintained cost of living. However, a troubling issue remains, and that is the gap between compensation for upper administration and faculty.

We often hear at in-service and other meetings what an important role the faculty play in the institution. Teaching, after all, is the college's primary mission. It is, as folks say, "where the rubber meets the road." A reasonable conclusion might be that teachers, who are at the forefront in fulfilling our mission, should have salaries comparable to administration -- on the contrary. I have noticed that the farther removed one in the professional ranks is from the classroom and students, the higher the salary. I know all the arguments about administrative responsibility to the district, the legislature, the taxpayers, and so on. I grant the validity of the arguments. I would argue, however, that faculty shoulder every bit as much responsibility and work every bit as hard fulfilling that responsibility. The gap in salaries, it would seem, should not be large. I find it difficult to measure the ideal ratio. Would 2:1 administrative to faculty be fair? Actually, given the workload of faculty, it seems a bit imbalanced.

Out of curiosity, the union submitted a freedom of information request to the district inquiring about the total compensation packages for 1994-95 and 1995-96 for upper level administration, including campus presidents, vice-chancellors, and the chancellor. We received the following data:

	<u>Salary</u>		<u>Deferred Comp.</u>		<u>Business Expense</u>		<u>Performance</u>	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
Chancellor	\$136,591	\$140,689	5%	5%	\$1,000/mo.	\$1,000/mo.	11%	2%
Vice Chancellors Presidents	\$87,723	\$90,354	5%	5%	\$300/mo.	\$500/mo.	N/A	N/A

Notes on the above compensation:

- Automobiles are provided for each administrative officer.
- Service club dues are provided. The Chancellor is a member of the Humble Rotary Club.
- Business expense income is a fully taxed stipend providing for expenses which are supportive of the District's interests.
- The Board has provided a performance incentive for the Chancellor. The award for 1995 was in lieu of the 5% across-the-board salary increase, i.e., the 1995 salary was the same as 1994.
- Compensation packages for administrative officers are comparable to other Texas multi-college districts. Dallas, Houston, Collin County and San Jacinto provide compensation at higher levels than NHMCCD.

Deferred compensation may call for further clarification. Basically, the district contributes 5% of the salary into a tax sheltered annuity for each upper level administrator. This money would be above and beyond the regular contributions to Teachers Retirement System or the Optional Retirement System. Another point requiring clarification is the note regarding the 1995 performance incentive for the chancellor. The note states that the performance incentive was "in lieu of the 5% across the board salary increase, i.e., the 1995 salary was the same as 1994." The translation of this is an 11% salary increase in 1995, rather than the 5% received by other employees.

Some of you might expect me, at this point, to launch into a diatribe about administration being overpaid. In fact, that is not my point. I do not begrudge them their compensation packages. They work hard for them. It is the gap between their compensation and that of faculty that disturbs me. The gap in salary alone is wide. The highest paid faculty member earns around \$70,000 annually. This is an individual who has served the district for over twenty years. The administrative salaries in the chart above are for individuals who have been

with the district, with one exception, for five or less years. When we consider the remainder of the compensation packages, the gap becomes even more dramatic. Dr. Pickelman defends administrative compensation as being in line with other similar community colleges, and well it may be. The fact that our administrative and faculty salaries are in line with other schools does not mean that they are just. Perhaps faculty across the state are underpaid. Being among the best of the underpaid is not exactly an honor.

In fact, I believe that the gap between administrative and faculty salaries should be narrowed. The ideal would be no gap between them if teaching is, in fact, the core of the college's mission. Realistically, that probably will not happen anytime soon. If the college is serious about the value of teaching, faculty salaries must approach administrative salaries. We need to quit placing higher value on removing oneself from the classroom and students. People in power in the district -- the board, the chancellor, the vice-chancellors, the presidents -- all say that teaching is our most important job. However, the district's administrative compensation package demonstrates where the real value is placed.

Alan Hall

### **Union Member Wins Appeal**

A full-time police officer who is an AFT member was given a written reprimand over an incident which occurred on September 19, 1996. The Board was meeting at the district office that evening, and this officer and a part-time officer were on duty. A car with two males and a female ran the stop sign at the end of the building and sped up the ramp. The officer warned the male driver, who was accompanied by the female as he approached the building, that he would be ticketed for such an incident in the future. A few minutes later, the same car started and the second male sped down the ramp, screeched the tires, slid around the corner, and drove between the parking garage and the main building. The two officers, stepped into the street and stopped the vehicle. The full-time officer asked the driver three times to step out of the vehicle. When the driver did not comply, the officer pulled him from the vehicle, laid him against the car and frisked him. The part-time officer retrieved a ticket book from the officer's desk in the lobby, and the driver was ticketed. These events were observed by the full-time officer's supervisor, with whom the officer has had conflicts in the past. The supervisor was in his office on the third floor, heard the commotion of the squealing tires, went to the window and saw the event unfolding; he went down three flights of stairs, and hid in one of the doorways at the end of the building "to observe."

The supervisor initially wanted an immediate suspension of the officer but settled for a written reprimand. The officer, with union representation, appealed the reprimand because it contained errors in fact, omissions of fact, and erroneous inferences.

In the reprimand, the officer is cited for approaching the vehicle with his hand on his gun and is warned to "take appropriate care to avoid showing intent to draw [his] gun." The supervisor omits the fact that the officer was running toward the vehicle. Police training and common practice are for an officer to place his hand on his weapon while running to prevent it dislodging from the holster. The supervisor knew the officer was running but left that fact out of the reprimand. He also neglected to note that the officer removed his hand from his weapon when he arrived at the vehicle.

The supervisor also cited the officer for "physical action taken towards the driver (pulling him from the car and slamming him against the car)" and warned him to "take appropriate care to avoid showing intent. . . to use physical action without probable cause." The supervisor did note that "[b]ased on the action of the driver, it appears that the physical action might have been necessary." However, the officer was still reprimanded for his action. The supervisor omitted the fact that the officer asked the driver to step out of the car and he refused, a fact corroborated by the assisting officer. The full-time officer contends that he pulled the driver from the car, turned him around with just enough force to lay him over the car but did not slam him against the vehicle. The supervisor omitted the fact that the officer did not know at this point whether or not the driver was armed and had ample probable cause.

Finally, the supervisor cited the officer for "profanity toward the driver" and warned him to "take appropriate care to avoid loosing [sic] temper or using profanity toward someone as [he] represent[s] NHMCCD." The supervisor had in his possession and, upon request of the union representative, provided copies of all evidence that he used in the investigation. All accounts from the witnesses begin by noting the loud sound of the vehicles squealing tires, which caused them to rush to see what the commotion was. The driver endangered the lives of the two officers, several students, and perhaps other citizens. When the officers got the vehicle stopped, the driver told the full-time officer that his actions had been an accident. The officer replied, "That's bullshit," expressing his estimation of the value of the driver's declaration of innocence in an earthy but not profane manner. The officer put himself at risk stopping the vehicle driven by a potentially armed man. All these events were observed by his supervisor hiding out of harm's way in a doorway, peeking out to see what was happening, apparently troubled by the officer's behavior. To give a written reprimand over the use of a mild expletive seems petty at best. The officer is well aware of the supervisor's concern, and a simple reminder would have been sufficient.

The officer was also reprimanded for failing to note the incident in the log and to file a written report of the incident. The officer regretted not making the written notes and agreed to do so in the future.

Fortunately, we prevailed in the appeal hearing. The supervisor's manager agreed to remove the original letter from the officer's personnel file but expressed a willingness to support putting a letter back in the file on the use of profanity. This officer wisely chose to join the AFT a long time ago, and we were by his side



every step of the way. Acting on his own, he may have found himself suspended or even fired.

The union is pleased with the outcome. We do not want our officers having to look over their shoulders as they execute the duties of their job in fear that a supervisor may be lurking about anxious to write them up. So long as they follow state law and do not violate policy and procedure, they should be allowed to do their job. Employees have the right to expect support from their supervisors. If remediation is necessary, there are supportive ways to provide it. Lack of support is indefensible, so is a supervisor's efforts to scuttle a career inappropriately.

Alan Hall

### Officer L. M. Stewart Wins Award

On Friday, November 7, Officer L. M. Stewart received the Star of the Month award at the district office. All district employees are eligible for the award and may be nominated by their co-workers. In Officer Stewart's nominations his co-workers expressed their heartfelt appreciation of him. In his presentation, Dr. Pickelman said that when Stew is on the job, "... we don't have to worry about security problems or unwelcome intruders. We can concentrate on doing our jobs well because he's doing his job." After a standing ovation, Stew said that this was the second time he had been embarrassed lately. The district office employees recently turned out en masse to celebrate Stew's birthday. A 73, he is the oldest full-time employee in the district.

Alan Hall

We have another Doonesbury treat for you. Reprinted here with permission from Universal Press Syndicate

## Doonesbury

by Garry Trudeau



## Glad She's Among Us

In 1985, when I came to teach at NHC, fresh from Texas A & M, Dr. Pat Gray was one of the first people that I met here at the college. I remember her kindness from the start. Once, when Pat evaluated me, she said I had a "lilting voice." I had always hated to hear my voice on recordings and after her comment, I sort of reevaluated my voice . . . felt better about it. Pat gave me good advice on how to keep the students quiet in class once. She said that she walks around, and if a student is particularly distracted, talking or whatever, she might just place a hand on his or her shoulder and keep right on lecturing. She said it worked everytime. Of course, nowadays we aren't supposed to "touch" the student. But I like Pat's common sense approach, and have tried her method. It works!

Pat is a very human person. Not all people are completely human according to D. H. Lawrence, and his thoughts are shared by many. Keats saw this life as a soul-making journey. Eastern religions speak of becoming human when we ask who we are and what we are here for. . . when we reflect on our predicament and our task. Pat has done a lot of soul-making and reflecting, I feel sure. Recently, I was fortunate to be involved in a semester of work with her, and I enjoyed her insight into our profession and her humor. Pat likes to laugh and to make others laugh. Joy is a very human emotion, it requires empathy - a soul thing. Being human involves caring about others and having the courage to stand by them. I have been very impressed and much influenced by Pat's many essays in The Advocate. She never hesitates to place herself on record for what she believes to be right. It was in part because of Pat's courage that I joined the union.

Oh yes, and Pat has contributed to my life in another very important way. A few years ago, I wanted to quit smoking, and I told Pat this. I don't remember how the subject came up, the context of the conversation, but I do remember the story that she told me. She told me she once smoked too, but that she had a favorite nephew who had cystic fibrosis. When she saw his courage and his struggle for the very air that we breathe without much consideration, it gave her pause. She decided that she didn't want to hurt the healthy lungs that she was so fortunate to have while someone she loved dearly was struggling so hard with the unhealthy lungs that he had the misfortune of having. This was not unsolicited advice to quit smoking -- we all hate that -- this was Pat sharing her experience with me when I needed it.

Just recently Pat has been listed in the Who's Who of American Colleges and Universities. I believe all of us here at North Harris College are very proud of her. But she is not only a very good teacher, she is a nice person, and I am happy that I know her. Congratulations, Pat.

Nell Newsom  
Editor

**Remember the Adjunct Professional Day?** Remember the concerns many of you voiced about benefits, seniority, alienation, accommodations? Below you will find some of the stands taken by the AFT on these part-time faculty issues:

"When a full-time position opens, qualified part-time faculty should be given priority consideration in accordance with seniority and the requirements of the position."

"Part-time faculty should be given perquisites and privileges appropriate to their professional status and necessary for the effective fulfillment of their duties. These include office space, mailboxes, secretarial help, supplies, etc."

"Part-time faculty should have the right to unemployment compensation at the termination of their contracts."

The above recommendations come from the AFT ("Higher Education's Exploitation Problem." Recommendations from the AFT Higher Education Program and Policy Council's Task Force on College and University Part-time Faculty. On Campus: Official Publication of the American Federation of Teachers/AFL-CIO. Volume 15, Number 7 (April 1996).

If you would like to make these recommendations become a reality, you need to help us work for them. **JOIN the AFT.** A form for membership is below.

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American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
Texas Federation of Teachers  
Membership Application and Record Card

I herewith record my membership with the American Federation of Teachers recognizing it as the strongest spokesperson for educational workers in all areas and as an important constructive force in securing better education for the nation's children.

I

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
last name first middle

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ District Location \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Residence \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Social security \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pay my dues by: (circle one)

automatic bank draft  
(attach voided deposit slip)

Personal check  
(attach one month dues minimum)

other

Monthly Dues

Full-time faculty \$21.55; Full-time staff: \$14.40; part-time faculty and staff: \$11.30

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## Commendation for the Chancellor

The April 1996 issue of The Advocate highlighted the union's concern with the college's policy on FMLA which required employees to use sick leave and FMLA leave concurrently, a decided disadvantage to employees. Union president Alan Hall brought this issue to the attention of Dr. Pickelman, who agreed to investigate the concerns. Subsequently, a number of complaints from various segments of the district were voiced to the chancellor. We were pleased to read the chancellor's November 19, 1996 announcement that the policy has been changed effective that date. The union appreciates the chancellor's efforts in this matter and has conveyed that appreciation to him.

## -HAPPY HOLIDAYS -

This issue will be the last issue of the Advocate until January. We wish all of you a very happy and contented holiday season. Rest and be blessed!

