



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery
Community College District

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



THE ADVOCATE ***OCTOBER, 1996***

CONFUSION, INEQUITY, AND GENERAL INCONSISTENCY

Recently, a districtwide problem in the policies and procedures for hiring faculty came to the union's attention. Specifically, the problem lies in inconsistent procedures for hiring temporary full-time positions. A review of the September Board agenda reveals a list of what must be a record number of full-time temporary hires. Sixteen of twenty-two hires, or 72%, were temporary full-time positions. In some divisions, temporary hires have been treated as permanent full-time hires, including advertising, faculty screening committees, and interviews. In other cases, temporary full-time position hires were short circuited to the point that current adjuncts within a discipline did not have an open and fair opportunity to compete. No doubt, gradations between these two extremes also have occurred. These inconsistencies have occurred among disciplines on campuses district-wide. The union became involved when some of our adjunct members who were not allowed the opportunity to compete for a position asked us to pursue the issue. Our review of policies and procedures revealed that they are vague, ambiguous, and sometimes contradictory on the issue of hiring temporary full-time faculty.

New policy requires an administrative review as the first step in handling a matter that may result in a grievance. So, we assisted our members in requesting an administrative review of this situation. When no satisfaction was achieved from this review, we assisted the members in filing a grievance over this issue. To our astonishment, the grievance was rejected immediately on the grounds that adjunct faculty cannot file a grievance. The administrations' argument is that the grievance procedure is designed for full-time faculty. Adjuncts, they argue, do not have a property interest in their jobs because they are part-time, and, therefore, adjuncts are not entitled to utilize the grievance procedure. While union leadership felt this to be a narrow argument, we could not find enough evidence in policy to prevail. Thus, the grievance was dropped.

We then met separately with campus presidents and the chancellor to review the policies and procedures and the events of this particular hire. Agreement was reached that the policies and procedures regarding temporary full-time hires are vague, ambiguous, and contradictory and are in need of clarification in order to rectify the currently inconsistent practices. We anticipate that a temporary full-time hire will be treated as a permanent full-time hire, including advertising, input from full-time faculty within the hiring discipline, a screening committee, and an interview process. We received assurances that the disadvantages affecting our adjunct members would not occur again. Dr. Pickelman also welcomed the union's interest in working with Sandra McMullan, college legal counsel, on clarifying policies and procedures.

While he continues to insist that adjuncts do not have the right to file a grievance, Dr. Pickelman expresses his willingness to set up an informal process whereby adjuncts may seek remedy for problems. He also is committed to making certain that adjunct rights will be made clear to them in the future.

Unfortunately, the union was not able to undo the harm individually affecting our adjunct members in this recent hiring situation. However, we are grateful to them for having the courage to put this issue on the table. Every time one of our adjunct members has put an issue on the table, we have been able to achieve some progress. In the long run, the outcome of this situation will favorably affect all adjuncts.

Alan Hall
President

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

STUDENT BASHING

When I was an undergraduate, one of my favorite professors was just downright mean, but I loved him. When the class began, the door was closed and locked. No latecomers were allowed into the classroom. No one was late after the first week of class. He was demanding. His course was difficult. I wanted his approval because it seemed so hard to get, so I worked harder for him than for anyone; consequently I learned a great deal in those courses taught by him. He was an English professor, and I wanted to be like him. He was funny, he was interesting, and he knew all there was to know about Shakespeare. But, if you were not naturally above average in English, this professor had no use for you at all. Because I was above average, and enjoyed his praise, I thought his attitude of elitism was justified, most likely arising from years of frustrations with "dumb" and "dumber" students. He said some pretty terrible things to students; for instance, if a student who had just received a "C" said, "I don't understand why I got this C," he would say, "Of course you don't." Now, that may be funny when it is told out of context. But if we were standing in front of a student (with tears in his eyes) asking sincerely for knowledge of his circumstances, could we -- should we -- respond so coldly?

Since those student days, my attitude about teachers who are "crusty," "mean," and "hard" has changed. I still want to become like my favorite professor in many ways, but I want to be kinder. I really like my students; I feel tenderhearted toward them. I have heard too much student bashing from professors and instructors. It is all too easy to laugh about the stupidity of our student; most of us have several degrees and our "dumb" student is just beginning his road to knowledge. Many years ago, at another campus, the favorite lunch topic for the professors was some display of student ignorance recounted. Then everyone would guffaw--knowing themselves to be Oh so much more intelligent, feeling such a sense of superiority. I never felt good about his sort of student bashing.

Being a challenging teacher, being demanding, asking the best from the students are good things. Students are more likely to do great things when great things are expected from them. But, being a difficult and demanding taskmaster need not go hand in hand with having disdain for those students whom we deem as average or less than average.

We've all had funny things happen in the classroom, things which we tell among ourselves and laugh. Everyone loves a good laugh. I once had a student who, when told to write on one side of the page only, wrote a column down the right side of each page. He followed my directions. This was funny. I laughed. I told my fellow teachers. We laughed. This sort of exchange is not student bashing. When we demean our students, in their presence or in their absence, when we, with "bigger" knowledge, are mean to students with "smaller" knowledge, we become bullies.

Nell Newsom
Editor

ARE TEACHERS TO BLAME?

Allen Vogt has brought our attention to the September issue of the Texas Federation of Teachers magazine, Update, which sheds light on some recent comments made by Senator Dole. In response to Dole's comments, like "To the teachers' unions I say, when I am president, I will disregard your political power, for the sake of the children, the schools, and the nation," John Cole, President of the Texas Federation of Teachers, says to his readership, "Perhaps you thought that the problems plaguing our schools today are caused by changes in society that have brought drugs and violence onto our campuses? Maybe you think the disintegration of the nuclear family, leading to the erosion of parental involvement in children's education, is a major culprit? Or would you blame congressmen and senators (such as Senator Dole) for passing laws that require schools to include emotionally disturbed students in the regular classroom setting, without providing any extra money to help teachers meet that additional burden?" (TFT Update Sept. 1, 1996)

UNION HELP

Last spring I took over Dr. Tom Kelly's British literature class after his sudden death, only two weeks into the semester. I assumed that I would received the extra \$750 for exceeding half of a full-time instructor's load. But, when I talked to the people in personnel, I learned that I would receive a prorated amount for the extra class based on my current salary, but no extra money because I needed to teach the extra class for at least half of an academic year. The personnel people said that I failed to qualify by about two weeks. I asked Alan Hall, president of the Employee Federation, to check into the matter for me because I had also taken over an extra class at the beginning of November. By my calculations, I exceeded the requirement of half of the academic year by several weeks. Alan put the topic on the agenda with Vice President Richards a couple of times. Eventually, I received the extra compensation and a letter from Dr. Richards, apologizing for the delay and praising Alan for his diligence in the pursuit of a proper settlement. The union certainly acted responsibly and thoroughly to secure my proper compensation in this matter.

Bruce Autry
Adjunct English Faculty
NHC

MORE UNION HELP

The Union came to my aid in a big way, and I would like to express my appreciation and at the same time demonstrate the kind of service that membership provides.

In the fall of 1994, I received notice from TRS that twelve years of service were being deducted from my record until such time as official documents of verification of service for those years were sent to them. This would result in a 50% reduction in the retirement benefits I had anticipated based on the annual TRS statements I had received.

After trying unsuccessfully for months to have the problem resolved, I turned to the Union for assistance. Alan Hall did what he could to assist me for some time, and then made the initial contact with the Union lawyers in Austin. Attorney Ed Tuddenham took over at that point. As a result of his efforts, the necessary documents were forwarded to TRS and the years were restored to my service record within a few months. Throughout the process, Mr. Tuddenham was very supportive and positive, communicating with me frequently so that I would know that things were moving forward.

The most amazing thing in all of this is that it has not cost me anything more that the usual dues. In response to my letter of appreciation, Mr. Tuddenham said that I should thank the Union that had the foresight to provide this service for its members. You may be sure that I am very grateful.

Jean Neary
Professor
NHC



In recent years the TFT has fought to change the school bureaucracy's attitude towards violent and disruptive children. It was the TFT that campaigned for the Safe Schools Act and lobbied that act through the legislature in 1995. Our present campaign, Basics First!, aims to end social promotion, restore teachers' authority in grading, and ensure that every child learns to read by the end of the third grade. This is defending the status quo? (TFT Update Sept. 1, 1996)

There is much more discussed in this issue of the Update. It behooves all of us who are vitally interested in education to inform ourselves on these issues in this election year. We have a common concern - the future of education and therefore the future of America. If you are interested in reading a copy of this issue, I will be happy to see that you get the opportunity. Also, check out the NY Times article, "Attack on Teacher Unions By Dole Hits a Sour Note," on the front page of the Thursday, October 10 issue.

Thank you Allen Vogt.

Editor

THANKS! To all of you who wrote to say you were listening--you know who you are--I say thanks. And to those of you who gave your encouragement in other ways -- thanks! My e-mail was down for a few days, and I can't remember if I've written to all of you. We encourage you to submit your ideas and opinions to the Advocate.

Nell Newsom
Editor

A member clipped this comic for us. Gary Trudeau usually has his finger (or paint brush) on the political pulse of the nation! Thank you Garry Trudeau!

Reprinted with permission from Universal Press Syndicate

Doonesbury

by Garry Trudeau



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. Mail your membership form to Allen Vogt, A264-C, NHC.**

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

Are you interested in attending the Third Annual National Adjunct Faculty Conference on Adjunct and Part-time Faculty - January 4-5 - in Washington, D.C.?

The rationale for the conference is outlined by P. D. Lesko, Executive Director of the Conference, and I quote only a few words from him: "There is a growing recognition among faculty and administrators alike that the use of adjunct and part-time college educators has risen significantly over the course of the past 20 years. The pressures faced by those who teach part-time are enormous, and most all who teach part-time can recite a litany of those pressures: financial, personal, professional. . .the list goes on. With this growing recognition has come the understanding that there is a need for serious, honest and frank discussion of how to cope with these pressures and focus on providing adjunct faculty and administrators alike with strategies and information which can help them address these challenges and make positive changes."

I would like to suggest that our administrators could benefit from attendance to this conference since we have a history of the fastest growing and largest adjunct population among community college districts in our area.

Anyone interested can contact me for a copy of the Call for Proposals and Participation.

Nell Newsom

E-mail - ira.newsom@nhmccd.cc.tx.us

Overland mail - A 217

JOIN THE AFT!!

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