



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery
Community College District

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



THE ADVOCATE

JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1997

LESS IS EXPECTED:

A summary analysis of Dr. Pickelman's address to the adjunct faculty.

Dr. Pickelman's message to the adjuncts during the Adjunct Professional Day, January 25, 1997, was that less is expected of the part-time faculty member than of the full-time faculty member; therefore the part-time faculty member should expect less from the district.

That less is expected from the adjunct faculty member is literally true, but it deserves a close look. Over half of the faculty at NHMCCD is part-time, and therefore not expected to be on campus the 35 hours a week that a full-time teacher is required to be, they are not expected to participate in the choice of texts for their disciplines, they are not expected to counsel with the student to the extent of the full-time teacher, and they are not expected to represent the college in their respective communities to the degree of the full time teacher. Furthermore, they are not expected to be loyal NHMCCD; in other words, they have no long term contracts, so they can leave when they want to.

Unfortunately, the lack of expectations on the part of the college reflects the very concerns of many studies done on the growing adjunct faculty and its effects on the future of education: that part-timers are marginalized, that they do not participate in decisions affecting the curriculum of their disciplines, that they feel alienated because they are not made to feel important, and that they have no job security.

Dr. Pickelman is well aware that part-time teachers represent over half of the faculty at NHMCCD. He admitted that it is feasible, a synonym is "likely," that a student might attend NHMCCD and never take a class from a full-time teacher. This could mean that the student's education at NHMCCD is dependent upon those adjuncts from whom less is expected. Could this mean that the education this student receives is substandard? This is a common concern of many adjunct faculty studies being published today.

A recent study of adjunct faculty at community colleges across America found that "Currently, the total number of part-time faculty is twice that of full-time faculty. Moreover, the hours and the curriculum areas that they most frequently teach put them squarely in the face of one of the most challenging missions of the community college--the instruction of under prepared or at-risk student," yet "part-timers tend to be haphazardly selected, poorly socialized, rarely supported, and often ignored by the college-at-large." The irony is that part-time faculty have more than "eased the spiraling demands for college services" because salaries are lower for the adjunct, there are not benefits offered, and most are willing to work any and all hours.

The most "disturbing finding from this study is that few college administrators are aggressively and systematically directing their colleges' efforts toward integrating part-time faculty" (Roueche, Roueche and Milliron." Identifying The Strangers: Exploring Part-Time Faculty Integration in American Community y Colleges," Community College Review, Vol. 23, No. 4 Spring 1996 Issue.)

That our administrators are among those who are not "aggressively and systematically directing their colleges toward integrating part-time faculty" seems obvious. That the adjunct faculty has supported the expansion

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

of NHMCCD and "eased the spiraling demands for college services" is also obvious. A "professional day" every other year, however nice it is, is not a substitute for our administrators to take seriously the issues raised by over half of their faculty.

Dr. Pickelman said that most adjunct faculty members he speaks with tell him that they are grateful for the opportunity to teach. His choice of report on the state of contentment of the adjunct teacher has a certain Pollyanna quality to it. While it may be true that teachers are expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to teach, I suspect that this comment represents Dr. Pickelman's "ideal" adjunct: a professional person who is teaching to fulfill a desire to share his or her expertise, to give to the community. This adjunct was typical thirty years ago, but every published study speaks of the changing face of the part-time teacher. Nowadays, while there may be a few of these ideal types left, the adjunct teacher, for the most part, is one who is first and foremost a professional teacher, one who is looking for a full-time position, one who must teach on several campuses to make a living wage, one who has no other income and therefore has no benefits, and one who often feels alienated as a marginal member of the academic community. Surely Dr. Pickelman recognizes the fact that the adjunct faculty member is not the same as he or she was thirty years ago. And, of course, being grateful for the opportunity to teach and being disheartened at the poor treatment of one's profession are not mutually exclusive.

The adjunct faculty issues are important. They are important because part-time teachers represent over half of the faculty at this college district and on many campuses across America. Salary is important, treatment is important, hiring is important; all of these issues are important and being told that less is expected from does not make the many problems associated with such a growing and changing part-time faculty go away. In fact, from the comments of many of the adjunct present, the dismissal of their problems with "less is expected" saddened them.

In response to a question from an adjunct member on the hiring of adjuncts by the district, Dr. Pickelman said that NHMCCD would always look outside the ranks of the adjunct faculty; in other words adjunct teachers would not automatically be moved into full-time positions when available. He said that the district wanted new and fresh ideas, and that hiring from within too often led to "cloning." This of course does not mean that no adjunct teacher may be hired by the district. But, if you have been keeping all of your fresh new ideas to yourselves, always following the "rules," always agreeing with your "superiors" in the hope of securing a full-time position with your department, Dr. Pickelman's comments should disabuse you of that notion. Certainly new and fresh ideas are needed; and I met many part-time teachers on Saturday with an abundance of new and fresh ideas, and who were vitally interested in researching new ways to reach the student. Furthermore, while new ideas are always a plus, there are other considerations in hiring faculty: those teachers who have shown themselves to be dependable, dedicated, and good teachers should always be given serious consideration by the district when hiring faculty.

One adjunct asked about compensation which did not require a raise in salary. What about letting the part-time teacher take classes at discount rates? Dr. Pickelman's response was that this would be costly, because after all someone had to pay for the classes. So much for that suggestion.

Finally, the question of what happened to all of the suggestions derived from the adjunct sessions during the first Adjunct Professional Day in 1995 and reported to the faculty senates of the various campuses came up, and Dr. Pickelman suggested that the Department heads should have followed through on these. Among the "perks" that adjunct members attending the 1995 professional day asked for were job security, a choice of pension plans, free credit or CE classes, group health insurance plan that adjuncts could pay for (but at group rates), and the ability to join the credit union. In all fairness to the Department heads, how could they "follow through" on these issues without full cooperation from administration?

So, the adjunct faculty member who attended Saturday's professional day for adjuncts was left with the sure knowledge that less was expected of him or her.

But what is expected of adjunct teachers? They are expected to fulfill their jobs as teachers in a near void of professional community; they are expected to feel important to an institution which doesn't seem to care whether they return from one semester to the next (doesn't everyone need to feel important to his or her employer?); certainly they are expected to teach the student the curriculum by the same quality standards as the full-time teacher teaches it.), but for less than 40% of their counterpart full-time teacher's pay; and, finally, they are expected to be content with no recourse for change.

Much is expected of the adjunct teacher.

Nell Newsom

Adjunct Faculty, English - North Harris



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DID YOU KNOW?

In response to a question about why he was a member of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Einstein said, "I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and, also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field." Albert Einstein was a charter member of the AFT. He joined while he was teaching at Princeton University in 1938. (reprinted from an AFT Poster)

SUMMER CLASS TIMES?

Does anyone know why summer evening classes begin at 6:00 and 8:10 rather than 5:30 and 7:30? It seems to me that one of the reasons for the decline in summer enrollment is that the 8:10 evening classes often do not make. Students have told me that the prospect of getting home long after 10:00 is not appealing. Perhaps if classes met thirty minutes earlier they would not have to be canceled; both students and faculty would benefit.

MARGARET NUNNELLEE
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
NORTH HARRIS

MORE ADO ABOUT DUES - FROM THE TREASURER

In the October 1995 AFT newsletter, AFT President Albert Shanker emphasized the need for a growing, vital union movement today as much as in the past. Happily, this concept appears alive and well within NHMCCD. The membership rolls of our AFT local, the Employee Federation of NHMCCD, has breached the century mark, and particularly impressive has been the number of new members joining during the last two years. Principal contributing factors to this growth pattern surely include a recognition of the virtue of organizational versus purely individual representation and a recognition of the record of considerable influence and successful effort established by the Federation.

However, our relatively impressive growth/membership picture could be even more impressive if we were to slow or stop the loss of members because of financial hardship claims and dues delinquency. On behalf of myself and the entire Federation Executive Committee, I would like to address these issues and appeal to ALL previous Federation members seriously to consider re-joining the group.

Dropping Federation membership because of a perceived financial hardship in maintaining monthly dues payments is certainly a solid but not unassailable reason. Almost everyone at some crisis time pinches pennies and cuts financial corners. But, from the standpoint of pure self-interest, remember well what union benefits - insurance, legal, and consultative - are lost and therefore unavailable when that other moment of crisis or desperation almost inevitably arises. Consider how often one justifies regular payments to health and home insurance companies, personal savings accounts, even charitable institutions by saying that they are indispensable and likely to "pay for themselves" in just one crisis. It can be responsibly reasoned that union dues and membership are equally indispensable and likely to "pay off." Cutting financial corners is one thing; cutting one's financial throat is quite another. And please do not forget the more selfless and timeless ideal of simply seeking to help OTHERS through continuing Federation membership. This is an organization where self-interest and altruism co-exist.

Also, dues delinquency is an understandable financial development for Federation members, whether current, former, or potential. To any current or past Federation members, who have, at present or previously, fallen seriously behind in monthly dues payments, the Executive Committee proposes a modified amnesty program. The idea is that "catch-up" payments would be nightmarish and best forgotten. Therefore, instead of figuring and/or making payments for PAST dues, simply send me a check for the CURRENT month's dues, and membership re-instatement, i.e., in good standing and with full benefits, would be immediate. This plan obviously carries the assumption that dues delinquency will not recur. and please remember that union benefits (including consultations for job-related problems) re-commence only at the time of the re-instatement; benefits lost during the dues delinquency period remain lost for that period.

As Treasurer, no one knows better that I the money-trail nightmare of dues payments and collections! We hope eventually to have the option of payroll deduction for union dues at Texas community colleges, and many of our dues woes will be ameliorated. In the meantime, let us all agree to do our best and try to grow together.

One more time for the record, here is the current dues structure:

\$21.55/month = FULL dues (full-time faculty)
\$14.40/month = HALF dues (full-time staff)
\$11.30/month = QUARTER dues (part-time faculty and Staff)

I believe that I should allow AFL founder Samuel Gompers to have the last word here. In the May 1992 Advocate, I included the following right-on-the-money Gompers comment: "There is not a dollar which the working man or woman pays into a labor organization which does not come back a hundredfold."

Dr. Allen R. Vogt
Treasurer/AFT, NHMCCD



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THANKS FOR THE DAY!

On January 25, NHC hosted another Adjunct Professional Day for the adjunct faculty of the district. The attendance was decent and most seemed to enjoy themselves. I always enjoy meeting my colleagues from other disciplines and other campuses. The interchange of ideas is stimulating and socializing just feels good. The sessions were many and varied and I was sorry I could not attend them all. So, our sincere thanks goes to those who worked hard to put the day together for the adjunct faculty.

A special thanks goes to Pat Timpanaro.

EDITOR

NATIONAL ADJUNCT FACULTY GUILD CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

"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," so says the executive director of this conference, P.D. Lesko.

I asked for funding to attend this conference from NHC, from another teaching institution which will remain unnamed and from the AFT. I received support, and encouragement from everyone. And I received funding from everyone but NHC. I would have been very happy to bring the ideas from this national conference back to the adjunct faculty and the administrators here. This was one of the questions addressed at the conference: "What can individuals and groups do to move adjuncts from the margins of the departments in which they teach more toward the center of the academic community?" NHC could use some ideas in this area. But, Dr. Shugart said that the money was not available.

He did say, however, that this request alerted the college that money should be set aside for the adjunct for professional development in the future. (Money for professional development was one of the perks asked for in 1995 at the Adjunct Professional Day Conference) Perhaps an adjunct from NHC will be able to attend this national conference in 1998.

NELL NEWSOM
EDITOR

A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

We invite, in fact we welcome, contributions to the Advocate. Your ideas and opinions deserve to be heard. Send any contributions, essays or comments to Nell Newsom, Editor, the Advocate, A 217, North Harris College; e-mail: ira.newsom/nhmccd,employee

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