



THE ADVOCATE



RESPONSE TO THE WORKLOAD TASKFORCE'S PROPOSAL

On October 15 and 16, the implementation committee of the Workload Taskforce met in a retreat with the Instructional Council, part of the Executive Council, Senate presidents, and faculty representatives from each division. Some participants came away from the retreat pleased, but some left quite distressed. Over the following weekend, I received a number of calls about what had happened. The concerns were strong enough that I decided a meeting was appropriate to review them, so I announced a district-wide AFT meeting on October 21 and invited non-members as guests. That announcement caused my voice mail and e-mail to light up. Interest was extremely high.

I served on the Workload Taskforce. I know that the proposal put forward by that group is the culmination of eighteen months of hard work. It is the result of a good deal of give and take and compromise.

There are a number of good elements in the proposal. It reduces the teaching load for some faculty whose contact hours are way out of line with other faculty. Secondly, it addresses district-wide inequities. We found cases where faculty who were interested in working on various projects were savvy enough to realize that the projects had value to the district and negotiated a stipend or a reduced load to complete the projects. Other faculty were completing similar projects who did not realize negotiation was possible. Therefore, they were doing the same amount of extra work as their colleagues with no compensation of any sort. The taskforce's proposal takes negotiation out of the closet and provides more consistency and equity. The proposal also provides faculty flexibility. Faculty should be able to work on projects in which they are interested without killing themselves.

The proposal is not a perfect document. There are things about it which I do not like. For instance, the taskforce failed to get the Executive Council's approval for relief for counselors, librarians, and English faculty. Some of the elements are vague, for instance, the 70% - 20% - 10% split. That arrangement fits our current job description and is the result of a compromise. Some taskforce members wanted to quantify tasks performed by faculty with a numerical formula. Some members wanted to leave

our workload so open that it was difficult to determine exactly what a full load was. The 70/20/10 is a compromise-an *inexact guideline* for faculty load. The proposal includes many similar compromises.

The taskforce recognized that the proposal would need modification as implementation occurred. Concerns over implementation came to a head at the two day retreat. The AFT meeting provided faculty another opportunity to air concerns as well as support for the proposal. Peggy Aalund, chair of the implementation committee, attended the AFT meeting and agreed to take comments back to the implementation committee. Some faculty from Tomball could not attend the AFT meeting on the 21st and asked that I meet with them separately. I did so on October 29, and their comments have been passed on to the implementation committee as well.

Generally, faculty recognized the hard work of the taskforce and the proposal's flexibility and support for extra work performed by faculty. However, there were a number of concerns detailed. There were concerns over the 70/20/10 that went in two directions. First, faculty were concerned that it would be difficult to measure activities and bemoaned a lack of guidance in how this split would be applied. Secondly, there was fear of abuse resulting from micro-management by associate deans. Significant concern was expressed regarding the lack of a district oversight committee with the power to address inequities that are sure to develop in the negotiable model.

Additional criticism emphasized that the proposal seems to focus on and value activities peripheral to our main function, instruction. One of the key elements for implementation to be successful is trust, and lack of trust was a motif at both meetings, and the speed of implementation was also a major concern.

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There were other concerns expressed, but they are addressed by other articles in this issue of *The Advocate*.

The dialogue in these AFT meetings was lively and healthy. For the record, the concerns expressed came equally from members and non-members. The taskforce members who were present learned a great deal. The taskforce is not going back to the drawing board. The fundamentals of the proposal probably will not change. I am confident that the implementation committee is listening and will take all the information forwarded to them into consideration as they continue their work.

Alan Hall
President

THIS MONTH'S TRIVIA QUESTION

IS LABOR THE SUPERIOR OF CAPITOL?

Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration.

WHO MADE THE ABOVE STATEMENT?

- a. Cesar Chavez
- b. Samuel Gompers
- c. James R. Hoffa
- d. John L. Lewis
- e. Abaraham Lincoln
- f. Theodore D. Roosevelt
- g. Franklin D. Roosevelt
- h. Gerald R. Ford

(The answer can be found on page four)

IS THIS THE BEGINNING?

Did you ever see a car on TV that really grabbed your attention? It looked good, it had the features you were looking for, it was only moderately over-priced, etc. Then, acting upon that first impression, you went to the dealer, found "the" car, looked in the window, kicked the tires, and perhaps took it for a test drive, only to be really, really disappointed?

This was the reaction many administrators and faculty had to the new faculty workload proposal while attending a district-sponsored workshop this October. Prior to this workshop, there had been various,

sparingly attended meetings between the well-intentioned committee members, faculty, and administration, but until the workshop, few people really understood how difficult this proposal would be to implement.

One of the proposal's original purposes was to minimize discrepancies between workloads at the various campuses. The committee which was put together acted honorably in an honest attempt to design a new approach to workloads and provide flexibility to achieve departmental goals. However, the plan has some major flaws, which one hopes will be addressed and resolved by the newly formed implementation committee.

Under the new workload proposal, faculty will be able to "negotiate" their workload agreement with their Associate Deans. The proposal assumes a 70%-20%-10% baseline. Faculty will be expected to spend 70% of the time on instruction, 20% of the time on institutional support and/or community service, and 10% of their time on professional development. On the up-side, faculty who are active participants in non-classroom activities (faculty senate, committees, community service etc.) can negotiate a reduced teaching load to offset their activism in these non-teaching areas. The down-side is that faculty who are considered not active enough in non-teaching activities may be required to teach an additional class with NO ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION. That's right. An instructor may be asked to teach an over-load without being compensated for it. I am not making this up.

A second flaw deals with the entire 70-20-10 concept. Although it is intended only as a baseline, at the workshop there was an overwhelming tendency to micro-manage faculty workload proposals. Workshop participants were presented with actual workload proposals from a variety of faculty and staff. Time and time again, workshop participants tended to openly question the validity of almost every proposal presented to them. Although this was not intended to be part of the exercise, participants took much longer than expected to hammer out final agreements as to who should be paid for an over-load, who should not, etc. Some suggested moving some listed items from "professional development" to "community service" and vice-versa. Others openly questioned the time commitments listed for various committee work, time grading papers, etc. When presenting their various decisions, there was a great variety in the final outcomes of who got extra compensation, and who did not, and so on.

What is most disturbing about this is that the people second-guessing and altering these proposals were very frequently the very people who will be making these decisions under this new workload proposal. One AD in particular seemed exceptionally skeptical of almost every proposal, and voted extra compensation

only to faculty whose institutional service commitment seemed above and beyond the call of duty.

If this new proposal is implemented in such a way that those serving on the most committees will be most likely to receive extra compensation, this plan could result in an explosion of people serving on various committees. Then, as an AD, you would have to deal with the problem of whether or not these folks are actually attending all these meetings, and if they are, are they active participants or just putting in their time. Additionally, a proposal for academic year 1999-2000, listing committee work, etc. would have to be done A YEAR IN ADVANCE. Faculty would have to be clairvoyant enough to know in the fall of 1998 what committees, community service, and professional development activities they will be engaged in for 1999-2000. On top of that, professional development, community and institutional service will only count to that 70-20-10 baseline as long as they are consistent with the goals of the department, also as laid out a year in advance, and renewed biennially by the entire department with college approval. If you're still with me, there is a little more.

Should faculty in a particular department at a particular campus feel they are working harder for less compensation than faculty at another college, or department, or whatever, there is no appeals process nor oversight committee. Instead, workload agreements will be posted somewhere on the web, presumably with a web address long enough to reach to the moon, where faculty can compare their agreements to others and bring peer pressure on a rogue AD or college president to alter their agreements. I swear I am not making this up.

For the purpose of brevity, last and not least, these proposals, written up and negotiated a year in advance with your AD will still have to be submitted to the college and to the district for funding. The same people who told us that they will provide us with every tool we need to teach, the same people who believe adjuncts are over-paid, the same people.....oh, nevermind.

Let's say a particular department gets very creative with its goals, and with its institutional and community service commitments, requiring extra compensation for the faculty, and extra funds to pay adjuncts to teach classes normally taught by these faculty members. The district still ultimately holds the purse strings, and will determine how many and which proposals will be funded. Let's say you have 3 proposals, and the college or the district decides to fund only 2. How do those 3 faculty folks arrive at a just and fair decision as to which one gets funded and which one does not?

This could have a huge fiscal impact on the district's budget. How will this be funded? There is, after all, only so much

money in the pot. And we do have this unusual pro-rata summer pay arrangement which most colleges do not have.

Hmmm...

Regardless of whatever problems are uncovered by administration and/or faculty during the implementation process, workshop participants were told by district officials, at the very last hour of the workshop, that this plan is going through no matter what. It will be implemented regardless of any no-confidence vote by the Associate Deans and/or faculty. It will be implemented with no planned oversight and an uncertain funding future. When confronted with these concerns, the District's attitude was implement now, answer questions and solve problems later.

Good thing NASA doesn't operate that way. Let's launch first, and THEN try to find the moon....

Since the choice we face as faculty and staff is not whether this is going to be put into place, but rather, when, our only option is, as constructively as possible, to engage the implementation committee, point out flaws and propose solutions to them.

To make the plan more palatable to faculty, the implementation committee should consider the following solutions.

- First take over-loads off the table. Faculty's primary duty at this district is to teach. Being required to teach additional classes without additional compensation flies in the face of all that is fair and equitable. Should the rare faculty member not be "pulling his/her institutional service weight," that is a matter between him/her and his/her AD. District policy should not be re-written to accommodate those few faculty who place little weight on the value of serving on scores of committees. Perhaps one of the sources of this low priority on committee service can be found in the district's often-used refrain, "this is going to happen no matter what."
- Second, the 70-20-10 baseline should be altered to a 70-30 baseline with two categories: teaching and non-teaching activities. This would minimize the micro-management inherent in the current plan and actually increase flexibility for how instructors choose to allocate their non-teaching duties.
- Third, a district oversight committee comprised of faculty, staff and administration should be created so that faculty and administration can present their cases when disputes occur. To be effective, the committee should probably have more than simply an advisory role. College Presidents who have a problem with this should simply not be allowed to implement this new plan at their college. Inevitably, any increase in

workload flexibility also increases the possibility for abuse on both sides.

- Finally, an independent source of funding should be established to pay for reduced workload or extra-compensation proposals. No college should go without books or computers they need simply because the faculty has suddenly become "committee-happy". And there should be assurances that there will be no further deterioration of the pro-rata summer pay arrangement.

Are you listening Tomball?

For many faculty, this new proposal could be a blessing in disguise, but only if the implementation committee, and ultimately the district leaders, rescind their public stance that this is going to happen no matter what, and become willing to work with us in ironing out these problems.

Tim Howard
Professor of Political Science
NHC

TIME MARCHES ON

"Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance." I think the fundamental issue for all of us with the new workload policy is timing. We can grouse all we like about the flaws. I certainly did my share of grouching at the Workload Retreat. But we must recognize two things: first, the Workload Taskforce labored hard to produce a plan that overall has more positives than negatives; second, the Workload Plan is going to be implemented—we are going to do this rain dance, period! The outcome will be a question of timing.

The Instructional Management Team (IMT) at North Harris College has discussed at some length how we might best implement the Workload Plan in order to preserve its best features and modify its irritating features. We've agreed to go slowly, and thoughtfully, so that all of us will have sufficient time to learn how best to implement this plan. To that end, three Divisions (Math, Business, Visual and Performing Arts) will pilot the plan in the next several weeks. The Associate Deans of those Divisions will share with the other Associate Deans the critical issues that arise. We Associate Deans at NHC are committed to working with our faculty to bring out the best that this plan has to offer. Dr. Zizelmann has given us her full support in our effort.

Speaking only for myself, I do not want the District to implement a plan that resembles an "enlightened" work contract for factory workers. The 70-20-10 routine for allocating work assignments has an inherent danger of shoe-horning faculty time into a punch clock system. Associate Deans and faculty alike must be vigilant against any move in that direction.

I also think placing faculty workloads on the District Web is no way to treat professionals. The honorable intent is to allow faculty members to compare what

they're doing to what other faculty members are doing in order to facilitate equity across the District. I'll wager equity will not be facilitated.

My belief is that if you treat faculty (and staff) like responsible, high performing adults most of them will behave like high performers. Marginal performers have a set of problems that are never, ever, solved by workload policies. I want to see the Workload Plan used to reward professional performance. I don't want to see it used to "shape-up" poor performance, else the outcome of our rain dance will be a hailstorm.

We can all agree that a workload policy should be constructed to create opportunities. I think the Workload Taskforce tried to do that. Of course, it's not perfect. (What policy is?) But we've got to dance with it. Let us time our dance slowly and cautiously so that we're dancing in the rain, not drowning in a flood.

Gary Clark
Associate Dean - Natural Sciences
NHC

MORE WORKLOAD COMMENTS

The new workload model presents a great opportunity for flexibility and creative decision-making as we plan our fall 1999 schedules. It was developed over the past two years by the Faculty Workload Taskforce, which was composed of faculty and administrators.

The new workload model provides an opportunity for increased participation at the departmental level in important long-term planning. Rather than relying on rigid guidelines, department members will have the ability to develop creative alternatives for structuring workloads. Individual faculty members will be able to rearrange the components of their jobs to make the most of their own interests and talents in helping students and the institution. In addition, the department as a whole will be able to coordinate individual workloads in ways that enhance progress toward strategic goals. The flexibility and creative decision-making called for in the new model will require genuine collaboration among department members—both faculty and administrators.

Effective collaborative decision-making is not something that just happens. The transition to the new model will require that we all work together, refining the process as needed. If the workloads are fair to both the individual and the institution, if the proposed plan supports the division goals, and if the college can afford the plan, then implementation will be a success. As we endeavor to implement the new system, my desire is that there be a climate of open communication, trust, and respect.

Nockle Zizelmann
Vice President
Educational Programs & Resources
NHC

Contracting Out

In the past, the union has taken a position against contracting out. We promote hiring full-time employees whenever possible to meet the needs of the district.

The lure of contracting out is sometimes irresistible to the administration and Board. The cost savings is touted as beneficial to the budget because the college pays only for service and is not responsible for costly benefits.

These cost saving practices of the district have proven costly in other ways to our college community. Some colleges in our district have tried contracting out custodial services. There were problems with staff turnover, quality work, and a few thefts. Eventually, the colleges abandoned the contracts and hired college employees to provide those services. A more recent situation involved contracting out food services at Kingwood and Montgomery.

These colleges had contracted with Mixon Food Service to provide food service under a three year contract beginning in 1996. However, a clause in the contract allowed cancellation with 120 days' notice, and the contract was cancelled at the April 1998 meeting of the NHMCCD Board.

According to an article in the Spring Observer, Wednesday, April 29, 1998, the cancellation was primarily the result of a health inspection at Kingwood on March 27, 1998. The Observer obtained a copy of the health inspector's report through the Freedom of Information Act. The Observer reports the following:

"A health inspector found several problems, including: no certified food service manager on duty or any evidence that there was one; the employees did not know or use approved methods of washing rinsing, and sanitizing dishes; the employees did not have hair restraints; liquid shortening was stored next to toxic chemical cleaners; employees were eating and drinking at the prep table in the back room; and the employees working that day refused to show the inspector identification among other things.

Some of the violations fall under the heading on the inspection report of 'Serious Health Violations.' If a person works in food service, it is imperative that he/she knows[sic] the proper procedures for sanitizing dishes. For example, if a mixing spoon that is not sanitized properly comes in contact with a bacteria that causes food poisoning, the bacteria could be transmitted to every piece of food that it touches. So, the Health Department is firm that it is very important for employees to have the knowledge of sanitation."

The Observer also reports student complaints about Mixon's service, including rudeness, lack of knowledge on prices, charging different prices on different

purchases of the same item, and poor quality and selection. Hours were also reported to be "sporadic" because ". . .Mixon Food Service employees have failed to appear for work."

Kingwood College announced plans to hire their own employees to run the cafeteria, and the union hopes Montgomery will do likewise. The *Observer* quotes Dr. Steve Head, president of Kingwood: "We are interested in hiring our own personnel. We feel we can better meet the needs of our students." The union agrees with this decision. We regret the problems and negative publicity the college district received from this experience with contracting out. We would not pretend that there are never problems with service provided by our own employees, but we believe that they can be more effectively remedied. Neither do we deny that it is more costly in the short run to hire our own employees, but we believe that experience has shown us its long term value.

Alan Hall
President

KUDOS

Excellent edition of *The Advocate*. Makes me proud to be part of our employee federation. Alan, you know how strongly I feel about the registration issue, and you analyzed it with razor-edged logic.

Nell, thanks for including the piece on Quality Education. I totally agree with John Leo that we should scrap ed-school requirements for secondary teachers. Sad, but true, is the fact that we can more easily find physicians than we can find high school science teachers qualified to teach biology. Something's rotten in the state of Denmark!!!

Gary Clark
Associate Dean - Natural Sciences
NHC

CURRENT DUES

FULL-TIME FACULTY - \$22.80 per month
FULL-TIME STAFF - \$15.66
ADJUNCT FACULTY and PART-TIME STAFF - \$12.55

ANONYMOUSLY

For several months I have been reading with interest about just how low employees salaries are. I am glad for those people that the situation has been rectified somewhat.

What I haven't seen addressed is the even more pitiful salaries paid to the part-time worker, not just the students at minimum wage, but the adults who work hard for meager earnings. Equity and parity would be fair and welcome. After all, the District still would save on benefits, sick leave, paid vacation, etc. Or is low pay the whole point, to keep turnover high and costs down?

This is anonymous for personal reasons, but the issue is valid. It would be welcomed in *The Advocate* by every part-time employee. Thank you.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite you to send us your opinions, your news, your questions and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to Nell Newsom, Editor, ACAD 217, NHC, (e-mail at Ira.N.Newsom@NHMCCD.edu), or submit to any of the following officers: Alan Hall, President; ACAD 217, NHC; Rich Almstedt, KC; Tim Howard, NHC; Donald James, MC; Allen Vogt, NHC; Mel McFadden, NHC.

Join the AFT - Call Alan Hall

The *Advocate* is a publication of the Employee Federation of North Harris Montgomery Community College District.
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"Of course nobody showed up. Everything you're serving is on the union boycott list."

OBSERVE THE AFL-CIO "DON'T BUY" LIST

Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Answer to trivia question: The statement was made by Abraham Lincoln in his first annual message to Congress in December, 1861.)

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