



# THE ADVOCATE



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## District Makes the Right Move

The union was recently involved in efforts to assist several faculty members hired three years ago. These faculty, who included AFT members, were placed incorrectly on the college's salary schedule. The problem seemed to result from inconsistencies regarding credit allowed for teach assistantships, although we heard other explanations as to what happened. Human Resources presented several scenarios regarding the assistantship issue. What finally emerged was the fact that the district provided proper credit for assistantships in some instances and simply failed to do so in others. It took a good deal of wrangling back and forth with HR to resolve the situation even after the college admitted the affected faculty had been misplaced. The union's role in this event was primarily behind the scenes. We consulted the union's attorney on the conflict, conferred with Dr. Pickelman, and offered advice and coached the faculty through the process. Credit for the resolution also goes to Montgomery President Bill Law, who steadfastly supported fair treatment for these faculty.

The union's position was that, if the college misplaced these faculty members on the schedule, they were due a retroactive adjustment to the hire date and their salaries should be adjusted to include the percentage increases for the three years. The college, not wanting to establish such a precedent, offered to go back and grant what should have been the salary in 1995, adjust it for the percentage raises for 1996-1998 and offered back pay retroactive to September 1998. The faculty members were satisfied with that offer and accepted it.

The road to resolution was long, hard, and complicated. There were enough roadblocks thrown up that would make many people simply forget the problem. The union congratulates the faculty members on their victory and salutes their

resolve to see the problem through to a fair conclusion. We are pleased to have played a part in the process.

Alan Hall, President

### Mel McFadden Retires

Mel McFadden has become a retired member of the AFT.

In the early years, the AFT was open only to faculty. In 1990 we restructured to open membership to support staff as well. Mel was one of the first staff members to join and



quickly assumed a leadership position, serving as the support staff vice-president at NHC from his first year of membership to the day he retired.

Mel's work for the union was mostly quiet and behind the scenes. Countless employees owe a debt of gratitude to Mel for his wise counsel and loyal assistance. The AFT presented Mel a plaque at his retirement party in recognition of his contributions to the college and the union. Mel McFadden served us all well.

Enjoy your retirement, Mel.

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### Due Process: Know Your Rights

The union once again feels the need to remind employees of their rights. We recently encountered situations where employees were ambushed in meetings where supervisors discussed their job performance. In two instances, the employees were called into an administrative office with no advance notice and no opportunity to secure a representative. In a third instance, an employee was called at 12:15 p.m. and told to be at a meeting at 2:30 on a Friday afternoon. This employee was not scheduled to be on campus that afternoon. Two hours and fifteen minutes' does not constitute adequate notice to rearrange a schedule and secure a representative. The employee contacted me, and I contacted the administrator who called the meeting. When I explained the circumstances, the administrator insisted on going ahead with the meeting anyway, an action which would have denied the employee due process. Due process is a concept most people understand. This behavior was from an upper level administrator who should know better.

In order to prevent this violation from occurring, I contacted the union's attorney and then a really upper level administrator. The meeting, thankfully was postponed, but it took a major effort on the union's part to secure a right that is fundamental.

If you are called into a meeting to discuss concerns about your job performance or other conditions of employment, or are involved in a grievance, appeals process, or some other conflict, you are entitled to a representative. Protect your rights.

Alan Hall

## Congratulations

The AFT congratulates union members Claude Taylor and Melissa Stiehl on their appointments as full-time police officers at North Harris College. Claude has been a full-time employee at the college for several years, and Melissa has been working as a part-time officer. These are well deserved appointments.

### More . . .

The AFT also salutes Judy Stubblefield for her recent completion of her M.B.A. Judy is administrative assistant to Dr. Pickelman and a longtime friend of the union. Congratulations Judy!

## Union Benefits

One of the benefits of union membership is legal assistance, something the AFT has been providing more frequently in the last couple of years. Our commitment is to protect and advocate for employee rights. This commitment includes venturing into territory where some organizations will not tread—probationary employees. Texas is an "employment at will" state, which means that state laws provide employees few rights. Most of the rights employees in Texas do have result from collectively bargained contracts or, as in the case of NHMCCD, policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Trustees. However, it is only when an employee is out of the probationary period that these broad protections apply. While an employee is in the probationary period, that employee has few rights and may be dismissed without cause.

If an employee is terminated in the probationary period, it is very difficult to prevail in court, and many organizations will not vigorously pursue such a case. However, we have experienced situations here in the college district where we felt a probationary employee had been treated with grave injustice. In these instances, we have provided assistance, including paying legal fees in a court case. We have defended members who are probationary, difficult as that might be, because our commitment is to all of our members.

## Faculty Evaluation Taskforce Formed

The District's Executive Council has given NHC President Sandy Shugart a charge to convene a district-wide taskforce to review the District's faculty evaluation process. The taskforce has been organized, and the following background was provided to the group:

### Taskforce Background and Questions for Faculty Forums

*The current system of faculty performance review has been in place for nearly ten years. It consists of a combination of a sample of student evaluations of the instructor and a supervisor evaluation, including a classroom observation. The system does little to differentiate between new faculty and those with a long history of performance in the district. Nor does it differentiate significantly between adjunct and full-time faculty. Associate Deans report that is extremely time consuming and difficult to implement along with their other responsibilities, which have grown dramatically in recent years. Other important changes have occurred since the system was last revised, including the pervasive use of technology in instruction and management, the decentralization of the district, expansion of workforce and corporate education, and most recently, the fundamental system for establishing faculty workloads and objectives. For all of these reasons, the system of evaluation requires significant review and revision.*

The work of the taskforce will proceed in two phases. The first phase will focus on design principles—what features would be desirable in a revised faculty performance review system and what should be avoided. The work is scheduled to be completed by this May. The second phase will commence over the summer when several members will research various methods of performance review. In the Fall of 1999, the full taskforce will convene to begin discussions of specific methods and formulate a new system.

Faculty will have various opportunities to provide input to the taskforce. The college presidents will host a forum on their respective campuses. The Senate presidents will also host discussion on each campus. Faculty are also encouraged to provide feedback to taskforce members, who are listed below.

### Kingwood College:

Elizabeth Chapman  
Katherine Persson  
Carol Erb  
Nora Diaz

### Montgomery College:

Donald James  
Karin Lyle

### North Harris College:

Christal Albrecht  
Deborah Ellington  
Alan Hall  
Shelley Penrod  
Sandy Shugart (Chair)

### Tomball College:

Hulon Madeley  
Ruth Telschow  
Mary Jean Webster

### Ex Officio:

Ray Brantley  
Sandra McMullan  
Linda Segall

Faculty performance review is an importance issue for faculty. The union encourages all faculty to watch closely the work of the taskforce and participate actively in the development of the new system.

## Immunizations Available

AFT president Alan Hall was recently approached by a member of the custodial staff about potential exposure to blood borne pathogens. The college has a policy which requires that employees at risk be provided free immunization. The employee had inquired about immunization, but got no clear direction from supervisors and had not received the required immunization. Hall contacted Dr. Pickelman, who referred the matter to Sandra McMullan, who in turn contacted Hall on the issue. McMullan promised a hasty resolution, and within a couple of days the employee received the immunization. The AFT appreciates the administrations quick response in this situation. If you are an employee who is at risk from blood borne pathogens, you are entitled to free immunization. Contact Ray Brantley to make arrangements.

**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 or e-mail at [IraN.Newsom@nhmccd.edu](mailto:IraN.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; Mary Ella Phelps, TC; Velma Trammell, NHC; Allen Vogt, NHC.



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The Advocate is a publication of the Employee Federation of North Harris Montgomery Community College District.

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