



# The Advocate

## A New Year-A New Era

Welcome, everyone, to the first edition of *The Advocate* for the 2023 – 2024 school year. *The Advocate* is the newsletter of AFT Lone Star College, our employee union, and the local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, a nationwide union of educators and support staff 1.7 million members strong serving K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities nation-wide. Our local publishes this newsletter four times each school year and has done so throughout the 43-year history of our union.

I am Dr. John Burghdoff, Professor of Mathematics at LSC – CyFair and President of AFT Lone Star College. I believe we have prepared an informative and entertaining edition for you. We have special feature articles plus our ongoing columns, “Dispatches from the Front” and “Know Your Rights”. Contributing authors for this issue are Leah Kirell, Professor of Developmental English at LSC – North Harris, Steve Davis, Professor of History at LSC – Kingwood, and myself. I hope you enjoy it, and, if you are not yet a member of our union, I invite you to join!

Although the title of the union has the word “Teachers” in it, we believe that ALL employees of Lone Star Colleges are educators, no matter what your job may be. We all play different but essential roles in helping our students to fulfill their dreams. Membership is open to all staff employees, part time and full time, up to and including the level of director, and to all faculty, full time and adjunct, up to and

including the level of dean. Please see later in this newsletter for information on how to join.

Not only is this a new year, it is truly a new era for Lone Star College. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of our union, to welcome all of the following new administrative leaders to their new roles within the college:

- Mario Castillo, Chancellor, Lone Star College
- Bennie Lambert, President, LSC – North Harris
- De’Reese Reid-Hart, President, LSC – Montgomery
- Virginia Fraire, President, LSC – University Park (beginning October 1)
- Nancy Molina, Vice-Chancellor of Legal Affairs and General Counsel, Lone Star College
- John Guest, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison, Lone Star College
- Deseree Probasco, Chief Data Strategist, Lone Star College

We pledge to you that our union’s goal is to partner together with you to advance the mission of our college for the success of our students and the well-being of our employees. Your success is the success of us all.

I also welcome, on behalf of our union, all new faculty and staff of Lone Star College. Our officers and organizers look forward

### Inside this issue:

⇒A New Year– A New Era	1-2
⇒Fall celebration	2
⇒Save the Libraries	2-4
⇒Title IX, VAWA, and Phishing-Oh My!	4
⇒How We Win With HB8	5-6
⇒Dispatches from the Front # 7– Cheaters*	7-8
⇒Know Your Rights– DEI, SB17, and YOU	9-13
⇒Union membership information, AFT Plus benefits, and Shopping Discounts	13-16
AFT Officers	17

**Join Today!**

<https://join.aft.org>

### We’re on the Web!

[www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)

E-mail:

[aftlonestar@yahoo.com](mailto:aftlonestar@yahoo.com)





to meeting you all. Please take a look at the list of union officers on the last page of our newsletter and locate the officers on your campus or worksite. Feel free to contact us at any time to learn more about our union and how we can assist you in your career at this great college.

As we start this new year, I am full of optimism for the future of the college. Not only are we bouncing back from enrollment losses over the pandemic, but important work is underway that will make Lone Star an even greater place to work. In the very brief time that Chancellor Castillo has been in office, he has restarted the committee studying flexible work options for staff, and the committee studying workload issues for faculty. He has proactively reached out to open dialogs with employee groups including AFT. It was our pleasure to host him as our guest at a luncheon of the officers of our union on a recent Saturday and I am on his schedule to meet with him on a monthly basis to discuss employee perspectives.

This is truly a time of change and challenge for higher education especially in Texas. The articles in this issue of *The Advocate* address a number of these challenges. I invite you to read them all. The information will help you! The theme for this year for Texas AFT, the affiliation of AFT locals at schools and colleges across the state, is "Together We Thrive." I believe higher education employees, especially those of us at Lone Star College, are well positioned, not only to survive the changes and challenges around us, but to truly thrive.

Are you ready? Let's go have a great year!

*Have a great school year!*

John Burghduff, President, AFT Lone Star College



### Fall Celebration Returns

After a four year gap and a rousingly successful 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in the Spring, AFT Lone Star College is pleased to announce the return of our Fall Celebration. Mark your calendars for Friday, November 3, from 6:00 – 8:30 PM.

We're still working on the location so watch your email for more details. Come celebrate cooler weather, friends new and old, and the work of the union in supporting Lone Star faculty and staff! Lots of good food and a beverage will be provided. Join us and bring a colleague with you!

### Save the Libraries

Leah R. Kirell  
LSC – North Harris

My father was displeased when I returned home from my weekly bike ride to the local public library without books. It was the summer of 1982, and he was well into his day off: mowing, pruning and, like everyone else in our still mostly rural stretch of Greenville County, South Carolina, bemoaning that year's particularly pernicious cicada infestation. He had no time for and little interest in overseeing the daily routines. That's what books were for. So, my empty book basket represented a failure on someone's part to ensure his landscaping efforts went unimpeded.

I was without books because the librarian had deemed my choices "inappropriate" and refused to allow me to check them out. It was Judy Blume that raised her ire; Blume was perennially problematic, much like the cicadas. My father, upon hearing my sorry tale, promptly drove me back to the library. He listened while the librarian explained her reasons for not giving me the books: Blume's books encouraged promiscuity and early sexual development. My father thanked the librarian for her concern and asked that I be given the books. She gave me the books.

That librarian fulfilled a vital role in our small town. She was informed about the contents of the books in her



library, was attending to her role as an educator and civil servant in requiring parental permission for my book choices and quickly and politely fulfilled her obligations to provide me with the books once my father consented. She was a model of respectful, civil discourse and professionalism. Librarians like her are an often-overlooked cornerstone of American democracy. Through the careful curating of information from a wide array of authors representing myriad points of view and ideologies, librarians provide the means through which American democracy functions. It is not an overstatement to view librarians (even when we disagree with them) as super-heroes.

I'm nostalgic for the good old days this story represents; things are so much worse now. I thought then, as I do now, that banning books because they discuss topics like menstruation was ridiculous. Reading about getting your period doesn't cause a person to menstruate. Not reading about it won't prevent it, sadly. But I think the present culture wars, inflamed rhetoric and civil disruptions around certain topics elides the real importance of the lesson I learned that day: well meaning adults, acting in good faith, can disagree.

But today we are in danger of losing our libraries and our librarians and, I fear, with them, our ability to engage in public dialogue about the future of our democracy. For example, many Houston ISD students returned to their campuses this year to find their libraries closed and repurposed as detention centers:

This comes as part of the new superintendent Mike Miles reform program, New Education System (NES). Currently, there are a total of 85 schools that have joined Miles' program, and of those, 28 campuses will lose their librarians. The district said they will have the opportunity to transition to other roles within the district <https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2023/07/26/hisd-to-eliminate-librarians-turn-libraries-into-discipline-centers-at-28-campus/>

In Llano County, TX, adults, arguing over such seemingly innocuous titles as *In the Night Kitchen* and *Larry the Farting Leprechaun*, are threatening to close down all of the county's public libraries, denying all citizens access. They'd rather shut down libraries than negotiate over when a child is old enough to read about leprechaun flatulence. [https://www.tpr.org/news/2023-04-13/llano-](https://www.tpr.org/news/2023-04-13/llano-county-library-will-remain-open-despite-effort-to-shut-it-down-over-book-ban)

[county-library-will-remain-open-despite-effort-to-shut-it-down-over-book-ban](https://www.tpr.org/news/2023-04-13/llano-county-library-will-remain-open-despite-effort-to-shut-it-down-over-book-ban)

This is not how healthy democracies work.

The American Library Association (ALA) reports an unprecedented nation-wide attack on intellectual freedom and access to public libraries. Penn Faulkner has also documented an enormous spike in the number of banned books. Librarians are increasingly finding themselves caught in the middle of contentious culture war battles. Yet, the ALA has, for nearly 100 years, reaffirmed its commitment to providing all citizens access to a library's resources. The Library Bill of Rights includes the following statement: "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Librarians have fought to ensure the rights of all citizens to access information each citizen deems meaningful and necessary to themselves. But librarians are losing this fight today and are in need of citizens' support to fulfill their mission.

Institutions of higher education are uniquely suited to support librarians during these difficult times. Here at LSCS our librarians are afforded faculty status. This status, rightly, conveys to them the privileges and responsibilities of all faculty: to fulfill their professional obligations as described by their disciplinary organizations. While community college faculty are not granted the same protection of academic freedom and free speech as fully-tenured professors might be, librarians, like disciplinary faculty, are granted a modicum of professionalism via a multiyear contract. This allows our librarians to engage in their professional work with students and community members with more protection than their ISD counterparts or, even, in some cases, local, public librarians. It is, therefore, incumbent upon LSCS to reaffirm its commitment to hiring full-time faculty librarians and protecting them as they strive to meet the needs of our communities.

This mutual agreement is acknowledged in our current job postings. For example, LSCS is currently seeking to hire several part-time librarians. The job description for these positions requests that applicants be in possession of an MS in Library Science and 3 years of experience. Such requirements are an appropriate reflection of the value our institution places on the education and experience of librarians; it acknowledges the vital role they



play on our campuses serving students. In return for that expertise, LSCS must make equally clear that all librarians, full-time or part-time, will be extended the same rights as any other faculty member in terms of academic freedom, freedom of speech and freedom from undue pressure—whether it stems from individual students, community activists or legislative demands—to violate their professional ethics

Librarians have long defended the values of a pluralistic society. In is now time for those of us who have benefited from their work to defend them. We can do this through our hiring practices and through our continued, public support of academic freedom and promotion of civil discourse. We can do this by remembering the lessons of our childhood.

My father was displeased. It was his day off and he was well into his gardening routine when I stomped past him carrying my soccer ball. “Where are you going with that ball?” he asked. This was, I knew, a trick question. He was raking leaves only 10 feet from the neighbor-kid street fight that had precipitated my return to the house. He’d heard it all. I answered anyway, “they won’t follow the rules and play right, so I’m going inside.” He nodded and said, “fine, you don’t like their rules you can go, but you leave the ball for them to use.”

That same rule, and the truly communal, democratic sentiment behind it, should also apply to libraries.

Leah R. Kirell  
LSC – North Harris



## Title IX, VAWA, and Phishing— Oh My!

John Burghdoff  
LSC - CyFair

Growing up in the Pleistocene Epoch, when Houston had only four TV channels, and streaming services had something to do with fly fishing, one of the highlights of the year for my sister and me was the annual showing of *The Wizard of Oz* on CBS. Now you can watch pretty much any movie ever made, new or old, whenever and wherever you want, but, in the 1960s, if you missed this one telecast, you’d have to wait another year to see your favorite characters like Tin Man, and Scarecrow. Even though we knew every word to “Follow the Yellow Brick Road” and knew the exact moment the flying monkeys would appear, we made sure we were in front of the TV in time to cherish every minute.

In like manner, Lone Star College’s mandatory online training comes around only once a year and you have only a limited opportunity to see your favorite scenes – like the toilet papered office scene - and hear your favorite lines – like the endlessly repeated definition of Quid Pro Quo. Maybe the costumes are not as cool as Cowardly Lion’s and the tunes aren’t as catchy as “the Merry Old Land of Oz”, but the information is important to keeping ourselves and our college safe and welcoming to students and employees.

**The deadline for  
completion of all  
required trainings is 11:00  
PM Central Time on  
Tuesday, November 28.**

If you haven’t tuned in, consider this a friendly and light-hearted reminder that the deadline for completion of all required trainings is 11:00 PM Central Time on Tuesday, November 28. And, most importantly, remember that the not-so-light-hearted penalty of missing this annual event is termination. So, if you don’t want to be permanently “Over the Rainbow”, start your training as soon as you can. Watch for weekly reminders from the Office of Governance, Accountability, and Compliance in your Lone Star email.





## How We Win With HB8

By John Burghduff

House Bill 8, which passed both houses of the Texas Legislature this session and was signed into law by the Governor in June, radically changes the way the state appropriates funds for community colleges.

State funding is the smallest of the three main funding streams for community colleges, the other two being student tuition, and property taxes. Nevertheless, that funding is critical to the operation of Lone Star College and the 49 other community colleges in Texas. This year it is enhanced by an extra appropriation of \$683 million dollars from the state to be split between all the colleges.

Traditionally, the state's financial contribution to community college funding has been based strictly on enrollment. Bring more students in the door and you get more money. HB8 changes that model. Under the new model, funding will be tied to measurable student-focused outcomes. These will include:

- The number of "credentials of value" awarded, including badges, certificates, and degrees, that position graduates for well-paying jobs.
- Credentials of value awarded in high-demand fields where employers are looking for skilled workers
- Successful student transfers from community colleges to four-year universities.
- Completion of a sequence of dual credit courses by high school students.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is working through the details of how exactly these student-focused outcomes will translate into a concrete funding model. Retired Chancellor Steve Head, who worked with other community college leaders and state officials in advocating for the new model, is confident that Lone Star College will fare well in the new "performance based" world.

Naturally, some people are concerned that community colleges will experience the same pressures that our K-12 brothers and sisters have experienced with performance based funding at their level: inflate grades and lower standards so we get a shot at the money. Although that concern is real, I believe we, as the Lone Star family, understand that going that direction is a trap. Our graduates are going immediately into upper level classes at universities or directly into the workplace. Any shortcomings in their preparation due to a lowering of standards would be instantly obvious and Lone Star would quickly lose our credibility.

Instead, I believe the shift in funding gives our college a unique opportunity.

Funding incentivizes behavior.

*"..if we are funded based on completion, then we are incentivized to invest more heavily in programs and behaviors that will keep students here once they start, and see them through until they leave with a degree, certificate or other "credential of value."*

If we are funded by enrollment only, we are incentivized to spend on activities that get students in the door and signed up for as many classes as possible. A few years ago, there were banners posted around at least some Lone Star campuses urging students to sign up for one more class and graduate faster. These signs made me cringe. Most of our students are working and raising families. They have heavy time burdens. For many of them, taking one more class means dropping out faster – and probably with debt.

However, if we are funded based on completion, then we are incentivized to invest more heavily in programs and behaviors that will keep students here once they start, and see them through until they leave with a degree, certificate or other "credential of value." This opens the door to rich conversations about what that would look like.

How we approach advising could be one such conversation. The concept of "intrusive advising" has been around for a couple of decades now. In this model, advisors talk to students holistically about all of the obligations and challenges in their lives and help them set up a plan unique to them at a pace they can handle. Students check back in with the advisor frequently to discuss progress and possible changes of course. Even catching a student who failed a prerequisite class before they sign up for a subsequent class for which they are not pre-



pared would be an important step in promoting success. It is especially ideal if students can speak with the same advisor every semester. This is a time intensive process that requires a large staff so advisors can take the time needed to have in-depth conversations. However, if funding is based on successful completion, the extra costs can pay off.

Students often drift away from college for reasons that have nothing to do with academics. For some of them, the loss of a childcare arrangement, a rent increase, or even a flat tire, can be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Robust wrap around services can make the difference in keeping them moving forward with their education.

AFT at the national level offers a [Community Schools Model](#) (not to be confused with the organization Communities in Schools) they can share with K-12 schools. This model turns schools, particularly in underserved areas, into community hubs with health clinics, mental health counseling, childcare centers, food pantries, community gardens, and social gathering spaces on campus either paid for by the school district or offered in partnership with area non-profits. With costs shared over several agencies, and possibly with grant funding, Community Schools can be feasible. Houston Independent School District had a Community School on the north side but I don't know if it survived the state takeover. Can such models, or pieces of these models, be adapted to the community college setting? I don't know but, with funding based on completion rather than enrollment, it can be worthwhile to look.

We used to have childcare facilities on several campuses but closed them for an array of reasons. If such facilities help college students stay in school, perhaps they deserve another look.

We live in a metropolitan area in which public transportation options are limited outside of the city core. Only a handful of our centers and campuses have convenient bus service. What conversations can we have about transportation options at our sites that are farther out from town?

Affordable class materials and first day access to class materials could potentially have an impact on getting students engaged with their classes on the first day of school. There are challenges and shortcomings to these programs but, if they have the potential of re-

taining students and moving them towards completion, it becomes worthwhile to have conversations about resolving some of the challenges.

Lone Star College is already highly supportive of student organizations and activities. These organizations and activities foster a sense of belonging that increases the probability that students will stay and complete their programs. Some of these organizations focus on helping particular groups of students to succeed. Senate Bill 17, which will be discussed in a later article, does not outlaw these organizations as long as they are open to anyone who wants to participate. Outcomes based funding shifts these programs from nice ideas to mission critical ones.

Finally, performance based funding incentivizes conversations about what happens in our classrooms themselves. That might sound scary, but rest assured I'm not talking about dumbing down classes. Evidence shows that high standards, not low standards, drive successful completion of programs. Instead, conversations could include whether current class sizes and teaching loads allow professors to give students the attention they need, creating time for faculty to develop innovative teaching ideas, and funding resources for the classroom.

These are just some samples of the kinds of conversations that can take place. Some of these conversations are underway already. A funding model built on completion of credentials simply increases the impetus to have them. Where these conversations will lead is hard to say – I certainly don't have those answers - but we now have greater incentives to pursue them. The result can be a win for our students and a win for our college.





## Dispatches from the Front #7 Cheaters\*

**Steve Davis, Professor of History, Lone Star College  
-Kingwood**

This Sunday early in the semester has been good so far. Many full-time faculty at LSC-Kingwood have now shifted to a largely MW/TTh schedule which it seems has not only been good for our enrollments but is also conducive to mental health as it now enables more of a true weekend. And this weekend is closing well as at least the Astros have salvaged the series in Kansas City against the last-place Royals this afternoon with a vital victory.

On September 7, author Jonathan Silverman spoke on our campus on his collection of essays, ***Astros and Asterisks***, about the ball club's 2017 cheating scandal. The book, published by UT Press in August, has a variety of writers offering thoughts on what happened that year of Hurricane Harvey and why it matters. My own students in attendance didn't get the reference in the title and Silverman neglected in his talk to explain it. Asterisks became a watch word in baseball during the magical 1961 season when both Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle of the Yankees were chasing Babe Ruth's 1927 record of 60 home runs, a mark which some believed might always stand. It continued to stand in a way, even as Maris finished that pennant campaign with 61 round trippers. An "asterisk" however was attached (at least symbolically) to the record book since Maris needed all 162 games to accomplish the feat, whereas the incomparable Babe had played only 154. With expansion of the American league from eight to ten teams the same year as Maris's feat, the season had been lengthened by eight games, giving Maris an unfair advantage. Hence, the qualified breaking of the record as Maris had been stuck at 59 homers at the conclusion of his 154<sup>th</sup> game.

Babe Ruth's milestone was not truly surpassed until the 1998 season when both Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa exceeded his total after 154 games. But asterisks would be deployed once more as both McGwire and Sosa were notoriously bulked up from the use of banned steroids. There was so much talk at the time of the rampant use of performance-enhancing drugs. One wag pointed out that Babe Ruth and other athletic

gods of his era by contrast took performance-diminishing drugs---they were drunks! It does stagger the imagination to wonder what Babe Ruth could have done at the height of his career had he ever been in shape and sober.

To this day, neither Mark McGwire nor Sammy Sosa is in baseball's Hall of Fame (nor are other big culprits like Barry Bonds or Roger Clemens) as they are widely viewed as CHEATERS, men whose pumped up and ultimately bogus stats sullied the reputation of the country's most exalted game.

At LSC-Kingwood, Jonathan Silverman faced some headwinds as some hardcore Astros fans in the audience were still in denial that the Astros really cheated through the 2017 season and arguably may not have even reached the World Series without their dishonesty. Americans are delusional about a number of topics at this historical juncture, and this is no exception. As a lifelong Astros fan who also remembers going to the ballpark to root for the Buffs and the Colt 45s, let me state unequivocally that the charges against the home team are TRUE and that an asterisk attached to the 2017 world title is perhaps merited. Yes, cheating in the form of stealing signs has always been around in baseball as Silverman's book documents but the Astros raised this dark art to a previously unseen height of sophistication. They became what one writer has called the NASA of cheaters, an appropriate metaphor for a team which sometimes wears "Space City" on its jerseys. What many students of this episode find so fascinating is the high and low-tech aspects of what they did. The widespread adoption of analytics (which in some ways is warping education as much as sports) led the Astros to place cameras in Minute Maid stadium in order to film and study heretofore arcane aspects of the game which could then be mathematically scrutinized. Those same cameras could be used to record the signs opposition catchers were using to communicate to pitchers what to throw to batters. Hotshot analytics guys in the back room were then using this data to decipher the signs of rivals (through a computer program called CODEBREAKER). Once aware of what pitch was coming, they electronically communicated to player co-conspirators in the dugout who then whacked a plastic trash can to signal to the batter at the plate what kind of pitch was coming, whether a fastball or curve based upon the number of bangs. Pretty sleazy stuff by any standard.



Now it has always been more or less accepted in baseball that if signs could be picked up and stolen without technical assistance, that such behavior was acceptable within the unwritten conventions of the game. This typically happens when a runner on second base sees the number of fingers the catcher is flashing and in some way signals his teammate in the batter's box. On a far less consequential level, I engaged in something like this more than twenty years ago when I coached the Rough Riders, the club baseball team of what was then Kingwood College. In one of our games in the Houston Men's Adult Baseball League, I could see from the third-base coach's box the signs of a rather careless catcher. It was a simple matter to convey the next pitch to our hitter by calling out either his first name or uniform number at the end of a "let's go" to communicate either fastball or curve. We lit that team up for six or seven runs in the first inning and never looked back. What our team did was at least marginally acceptable yet had the other club discovered the chicanery they would probably have been right to plunk one of our hitters right in the ribs, also acceptable within baseball's tacit code of on-field behavior.

Now how is any of this relevant to what we do every day as Lone Star employees? It's directly connected to our mission as high-tech methods of cheating such as ChatGPT threaten the very legitimacy of our "finished product": critically-thinking, well-informed students.

Chat and other AI (Artificial Intelligence or Appalling Ignorance?) programs which debuted less than a year ago are devilishly good at composing quality answers to traditional essay questions. Many students find it hard to resist such an alternative to the nitty-gritty work of actual study and learning. I was at a July 4 party in Kingwood this past summer and found myself sitting next to a prominent officeholder whose campaign commercials are all over the airwaves right now. I decided to chat him up (so to speak) about ChatGPT and some of the challenges I was at that moment facing in designing my online course in Texas history. When I told him how stunningly good some of the robotic answers to prompts could be, this politician's re-



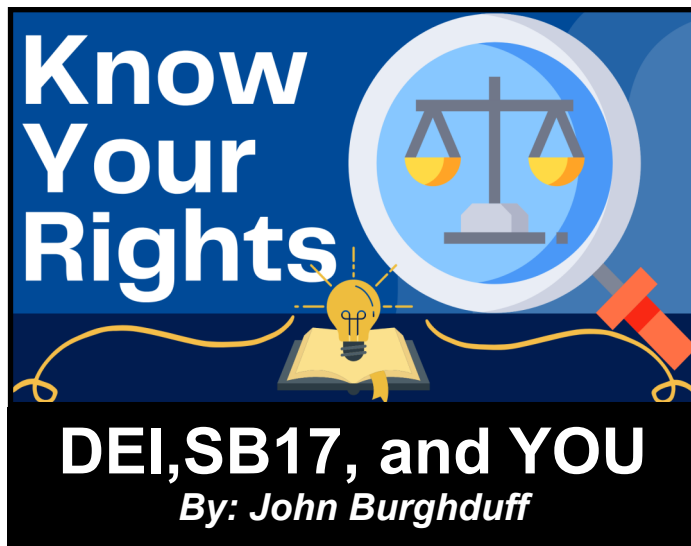
sponse was "man, I wish there had been something like that when I was a student!" It struck me that this level of oily shamelessness is one that maybe is needed to rise to a certain level of success in electoral politics. It took a couple of cold beers at the party to help me partially diminish my dejection that day.

**high-tech methods of cheating such as ChatGPT threaten the very legitimacy of our "finished product": critically-thinking, well-informed students.**

As to how we deal with the problem, that will require an entire future column. Let me just say in the present, that all professors in my discipline and others that require a significant amount of writing need to dig deeply and get really creative to "Chat-proof" our online courses. In face-to-face sections, in-class writing

will obviate much of the problem. In my determination to not let this new technology better me, I am inspired by the nineteenth century Black folkloric figure, John Henry, who courageously competed against a steam-powered drilling machine to assert his superiority in digging railroad tunnels. That story ends badly though as the hero "died with his hammer in his hand." In the meantime, we do what we can. If nothing else, there should be playoff baseball in October to divert us. In what's left of the season, let's root, root, root for our World Champion Astros as they continue to "kick asterisk."





Texas is a majority minority state. Houston is the most diverse major city in the United States. Employers complain that they can't find enough local workers with the skills they need to keep their businesses running. At the same time, nearly a third of Houstonians do not have access to the kind of jobs that afford them the essential benefit of health insurance. For a diverse society to thrive, it is clear that everyone living in that society must have equitable access to higher education regardless of social and economic background, and everyone must have equitable access to quality employment opportunities once they have obtained that education. Once access to education and employment are gained, people can only succeed and advance if they are sincerely welcomed and genuinely included in their schools and workplaces.

Diversity. Equity. Inclusion. Three pillars of a just and prosperous society without which most experts agree the city and the state will eventually stumble and decline. Of all the institutions in society, none have more impact in supporting these three pillars than a public comprehensive community college like Lone Star College. Offering a diverse community an equitable opportunity to be included in the benefits of that community is 100% what we are all about.

So, it is immensely sad that when you take the initials of these three pillars and put them together – DEI – you get something that has become so divisive especially as it applies to higher education. Divisive to the point that the Texas Legislature felt emboldened to pass an “anti-DEI” bill laser focused on higher education: Senate Bill 17 (SB17).

I will leave it to others far more informed than myself to explore the dynamics and the personalities that got us to this point. Those are important conversations that need to happen if we have any chance of healing the divisions in our society.

I have a more nuts and bolts objective in this article. This article will be informational. Simply put, I want to focus on what this bill says and how it applies to Lone Star College both relative to our students and to ourselves as employees.

### What does SB17 Say?

For those interested, the full bill in its final form as passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate and signed by the Governor may be found at the following website:

<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/html/SB00017F.htm>

First, the bill prohibits each institution of higher education in Texas from establishing or maintaining an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI Office), or assigning an employee to perform the functions of a DEI Office, or contracting with an outside firm to perform the functions of a DEI office. So, what constitutes a DEI Office?

Briefly, a DEI office as describe in the bill is a unit within the institution that influences hiring or employment practices, promotes differential treatment of individuals, promotes policies and procedures, and or conducts trainings with respect to or in reference to race, color, and ethnicity (and gender identity or sexual orientation in the case of trainings only) OTHER THAN activities and procedures developed by an attorney, and approved by the General Counsel of the institution and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to comply with a court order or state or federal law. The “other than” is a big deal as I will describe later.

### In addition to the prohibition of DEI offices or anything that looks like one, the bill:

- Prohibits the institution from requiring any person to provide a DEI statement or to use such a statement to give that person preferential consideration
- Prohibits the institution from giving preference to a



job applicant, current employee, or participant in any function on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin

- Prohibits the institution from requiring DEI training related to race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation as a condition of enrolling in the institution or performing any institution function OTHER THAN trainings approved in writing by the institution's General Counsel and the THECB for the purpose of ensuring compliance with applicable court orders or state and federal law
- Requires the institution to develop policies and procedures for disciplining employees or contractors who engage in conduct in violation of any of the provisions above.

Furthermore, the bill states that none of the prohibitions above forbids the institution from applying for grants supporting first generation college students, low income students, or underserved student populations, or for complying with accrediting agency guidelines that require reporting regarding any of those groups. Also, the bill states that none of the prohibitions of the bill shall stand in the way of the institution certifying compliance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

**In addition, and I cannot stress this enough, the bill states clearly that NONE of the prohibitions listed above apply to:**

- Academic course instruction
- Scholarly research or creative work by students, faculty, or other research personnel
- Activities of student organizations registered with or recognized by the institution
- Guest speakers or performers on short-term engagement
- Programs and practices designed to enhance student academic achievement or postgraduate outcome as long as those programs and practices are not designed and implemented regarding race, sex, color, or ethnicity
- Data Collection
- Student recruitment or admissions

Finally, there are requirements in the bill that governing boards of institutions must certify to the Legislature and the THECB that their institution complies with all aspects of the bill, and there are processes for auditing compliance, and for providing punishment for institutions that don't comply. I will leave those details to the readers who would like to check the website above.

### How Does SB17 Impact Lone Star College?

Writing as someone who is not a lawyer, once you read through all the "other than"s, and the list of what isn't covered, the answer is: It doesn't impact us much at all!

For a number of years now, we have benefitted from a very engaged and talented Office of General Counsel that has carefully vetted all of our hiring practices, policies, and trainings to make sure they are compliant with state and federal law. That includes the online mandatory training all employees are participating in as we write. Lone Star has never required DEI statements from anyone. Check mark so far.

The law is clear that, if you are a professor and your course addresses social issues like race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, you should go right on teaching about those issues. If you are planning to bring a speaker on campus to speak about diversity, go ahead and book their flight. If you sponsor a student club that focuses on a particular cultural or social perspective, make sure that any students who want to join are welcome whether they share that perspective or not, and set up the meetings. If you oversee an initiative designed to help students with specific characteristics to be more successful, open the doors to any students who want to participate and do your good work. If you are doing research on the success of students by race, gender, or any other characteristic, open your spreadsheets and follow the data wherever it leads. If you work in student services and want to plan a recruiting event in Acres Homes, or East Aldine, or Tami-na, or anywhere else, make the phone calls.

In other words, let the good work of Lone Star College in reaching every community in every corner of our district move forward!

I understand that there are committees underway on various campuses to develop procedures for outside



speakers on campus. If the purpose of those committees is to make sure orderly processes for planning and booking are in place, or even to be aware that some events may need special security, that is appropriate. However, if their purpose drifts into whether some points of view should be excluded, those committees are NOT acting in line with SB17.

In accordance with the requirements of SB17, the Chairman of the Lone Star College Board of Trustees, Michael Stoma, appointed a subcommittee of the Board to work with the College administration to review the implications of the new law and to recommend any changes to Lone Star College Policy and Procedure needed to bring the College into complete compliance. This subcommittee was chaired by Trustee Iesheia Ayers-Wilson and also included Trustee Ernestine Pierce, and Trustee Art Murillo. Their primary contacts with the administration were Carlecia Wright, Director of the Office of Culture and Engagement, and Mario Castillo, then Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel, and now Chancellor. All of these are people I respect who have the wellbeing of the College at heart. Together they crafted a number of changes that both ensure that we are in complete compliance with the law and that the College maintains its commitment to serve all members of our community. These changes were voted on and unanimously approved by the entire Board at their meeting on August 3, 2023.

The most noticeable changes were in the several non-discrimination statements in Policy applying to students and employees.

As a sample of one of the many statements that were changed is the following excerpt prohibiting discrimination against employees. First, the statement as previously written:

#### *IV.E.1.1. Policy in effect before August 3, 2023*

*The College strives to comply with all applicable employment laws, including laws outlawing discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on race, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, ethnic or national origin, genetic information, veteran status, or any other protected class. The College does not tolerate unlawful employment discrimination. The College prohibits retaliation against individuals who complain about unlawful dis-*

*crimination or who cooperate in an investigation of alleged unlawful discrimination.*

Explicit lists like this are common both in the private and public sector. The Constitution of our union local, AFT Lone Star College includes a non-discrimination statement that includes all of the categories listed above plus marital status and political beliefs. (AFT Lone Star College Constitution, Article III, Section 4).

It is valuable that all of these categories are publicly named and validated. Such statements help people who may feel they have been living in the shadows to know that they are valued. The Union has had a role in shaping this list for Lone Star College. In the early 2000s we worked with other groups on campus and then-Chancellor John Pickelman to include sexual orientation in the non-discrimination list for the first time. Around 2015 we spearheaded an effort to add gender identity and gender expression – an effort that took a full two years and dogged persistence to bring to fruition. We are extremely proud to have been involved in these efforts.

The Committee chaired by Trustee Ayers-Wilson came to the conclusion that explicit non-discrimination lists like these could be vulnerable to challenge either in connection with SB17 or with possible future legislation. They recommended that this particular policy protecting employees should be rewritten, and the following was adopted:

#### *IV.E.1.1 Policy in effect beginning August 3, 2023*

*The College strives to comply with all applicable state and federal laws. The College does not tolerate unlawful employment discrimination. The College prohibits retaliation against individuals who complain about unlawful discrimination or who cooperate in an investigation of alleged unlawful discrimination.*

Non-discrimination policies related to students were changed in a similar manner.

At first, these changes appear to weaken policy but, by invoking state and national law, they acknowledge a level of protection that undergirds that policy whether specific groups are listed or not. Obviously, if the state one is referring to is Texas, there isn't a great deal of value in looking to state laws to find robust protects against discrimination. However, an array of federal



laws strongly protects our employees and students. For example:

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility under similar working conditions.

The Age Discrimination Act of 1967 protects applicants and employees over the age of 40 from discrimination based on age.

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 protects persons of all ages from discrimination based on age in programs and activities receiving federal funding, extending protection both to younger employees and to students.

Titles I and V of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) require state government agencies (among others) to provide equal employment opportunities to those with disabilities and protects them from retaliation if they file a complaint

Title II of the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act (2008) protects individuals against employment discrimination on the basis of genetic information.

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in any school or educational program receiving Federal financial assistance, thus extending the rights of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act as related to sex to students.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (1994) prohibits discrimination based on current or former military service.

The Supreme Court Decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* (June 15, 2020) holds that the prohibition against sexual discrimination in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 includes employment discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation or transgender status.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights issued a Notice of Interpretation (June 16, 2021) that it will enforce Title IX's prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex to include: (1) discrimination based on sexual orientation, and (2) discrimination based on gender identity. This Notice extends the benefits of *Bostock v. Clayton County* to students as well as employees of colleges and universities. The notice bears the weight of law.

Based on these and other laws, the union agrees that the rights of students and employees at Lone Star College to be free of discrimination are still protected with the changes in College Policy. So, although we feel there is real meaning in publicly affirming categories of people that have been traditionally excluded, we concur with the changes made.

Of course, federal laws can be rescinded or replaced by Congress and can be overturned by the Supreme Court so we will have to remain eternally vigilant. The AFT, both at our local level, and at state and national levels will always be working hard to both protect and advance the rights of our students and our employees.

In addition to the changes in Lone Star non-discrimination policies enacted at the August Board meeting, a few other policies were changed to make absolutely certain that we don't run afoul of SB 17. One final example we will look at here is a change to the College's Vision Statement.

*I.B.1.02 Vision Statement in effect prior to August 3, 2023*

*Lone Star College will be a model college globally recognized for achieving exceptional levels of success in student learning, student completion, gainful employment, equity, and affordability.*

The new policy simply replaces the word "equity" with "parity." For a complete listing of all policy changes adopted by the Board of Trustees in response to SB17, please visit the following website and scroll down to pages 55 – 67:

[https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/chancellor/2308%20August%20Agenda%20V2\\_Public.pdf](https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/chancellor/2308%20August%20Agenda%20V2_Public.pdf)





So, once again, what impact will SB17 have on Lone Star College and the work you do in whatever capacity you serve? Basically, none. So, go out boldly and do that work and don't be afraid! Whether the Legislature appreciates it or not, a vibrant Texas depends on extending the benefits of higher education to all of our citizens regardless of who they are, especially those who have been traditionally excluded.

## Breaking News

AFT Lone Star will be launching a new survey to all LSC employees very soon.

Please be on the lookout for this survey and be sure to take it!

Your input is vital to help us advocate for what YOU want.

## We are here for YOU!



If you are interested in membership, benefits, or would like to discuss a work-related issue, our AFT Faculty and Staff Vice-Presidents are here to assist. Please don't hesitate to contact them. See the back page of this publication for contact information.

**We Care.  
We Show Up.  
We Advocate Together.  
AFT-Lone Star College.**



Ready to save on everyday expenses, like your monthly wireless phone bill, shopping, or even going to the movies? We thought so.

Save on everyday things, every day!

## Shopping & Discounts | Union Plus

We've got the [wireless savings](#) for your family's needs. Visit your nearest AT&T store and show proof of union membership



[Save 30% on flowers, chocolate & gifts](#) for the holidays, and make someone's day!



Did you know you can get paid to shop? It's true. [Sign up for BeFrugal](#) and earn cash back whenever you make a purchase!



[Save at local & national restaurants!](#) Union members & their families can enjoy delicious meals and get huge discounts!



[Save big on movie tickets!](#) Union families can get discounted admission tickets to national movie theatre chains!



**Union Members**  
**Save with Union Plus®**



## Joining AFT-Lone Star is the best thing you can do to ensure that you have a voice on work-related issues that matter to you!

Whether you have been at LSC for a long time or are just beginning your career, joining AFT-Lone Star is the best way to ensure your voice at work on issues that matter to you.

Our Union has a solid history of going to bat for our members when they need help and speaking up on issues that concern our members system-wide.

- ☐ If you believe faculty and staff should have a voice in educational issues, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe employees should have a voice in the political process, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe in the value of employees advocating for each other, you should join.
- ☐ If you believe employees should be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect, you should join.

Your dues help support these values.

Membership should not be thought of as only for "protection," but if you need help in a conflict, we will be there for you.

Don't join because you think you might get into trouble; join because you embrace the values we embrace.

**Join AFT-Lone Star**

**Click here to Join  
AFT Lone Star  
TODAY!**

<https://bit.ly/AFTLONESTAR-JOIN>

# Join Today!



*A Union of Professionals*

## AFT-Lone Star College

*A union of Professionals*

- \$8 million in professional occupational liability insurance (in case you get sued)
- Local staff and leaders ready to assist you when you need help and information
- Legal defense funds (in case you need an attorney)
- \$25,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy
- Strong leaders and lobbyists advocating for your rights at the local, state, and national levels
- \$5,000 free term life insurance for your 1st year of membership
- AFT PLUS savings and discounts for you and your family
- Educational resources and publications
- No conflict of interest– Administrators cannot join
- Strong. Active. Vocal. When you join AFT-Lone Star, you join the best!
- Pay your dues via bank draft or credit card by signing up online! <https://bit.ly/AFTLONESTAR-JOIN>  
<http://www.aftlonestar.org>

**WEB:** [www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)

**PHONE:** 281-889-1009

**E-MAIL:** [aftlonestar@yahoo.com](mailto:aftlonestar@yahoo.com)



# AFT-Lone Star College

AFT Local Union # 4518

## GOALS

- To promote academic excellence
- To protect academic freedom in higher education
- To preserve and protect the integrity and unique identity of each of the institutions of higher education in Texas
- To protect the dignity and rights of faculty against discrimination
- To ensure that faculty have an effective voice on all matters pertaining to their welfare
- To secure for all members the rights to which they are entitled
- To raise the standards of the profession by establishing professional working conditions
- To encourage democratization of higher education
- To promote the welfare of the citizens of Texas by providing better educational opportunities for all
- To initiate and support state legislation which will benefit the students and faculty of Texas
- To promote and assist the formation and growth of Texas AFT locals throughout Texas

**Membership provides  
professional career  
protection  
and a united voice at work.**

## BENEFITS

- \$8,000,000 Occupational Liability Insurance provides
  - security while teaching
  - protection against litigation
  - malpractice protection
- \$25,000 Accidental Death Insurance
- Legal Assistance
  - Free consultation and representation on grievances and job related problems
  - Services of leading labor attorneys
  - Legal Defense Fund protection
- Political Power
  - Texas AFT lobbyists in Austin
  - AFT lobbyists in Washington
  - Representation at the Coordinating Board
  - Support for local electoral work
- Affiliations
  - Affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO
  - Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and Texas AFT
- Staff Services
  - Professional representatives to assist and advise in processing grievances

### 23-24 Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$46.02
Full-time Professional Staff	\$29.62
Full-time Support Staff	\$29.62
Adjunct Faculty	\$18.28
Part-time Staff	\$18.28

### Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full-time and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on the back of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at:

[www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)



[www.texasaft.org](http://www.texasaft.org)

American Federation of Teachers  
Texas AFT  
AFL-CIO



[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

# JOIN AFT - LONE STAR TODAY!



[www.texasaft.org/join](http://www.texasaft.org/join)



**Offset your  
membership dues by  
using your  
AFT PLUS BENEFITS  
to save money!**

**Union membership gives  
you discounts on things  
you need every day.**

 "like" us on  
**Facebook**

Stay Connected with AFT Lone Star!

[www.facebook.com/AftLoneStarCollege](http://www.facebook.com/AftLoneStarCollege)



Our members enjoy savings on an array of  
goods and services with our  
**Union PLUS**  
benefits and discounts!

## AFT SHOPPING DISCOUNTS:

- ◆ Computers and retail merchandise
- ◆ Dining, movies and entertainment
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Personal vacations, hotel & car rental
- ◆ Save on Southwest Airlines
- ◆ 15% off AT&T
- ◆ Plus much more!



## **AFT BENEFIT PROGRAMS:**

- ◆ Life, auto, home, and pet insurance
- ◆ Credit counseling
- ◆ Home mortgage and home buying
- ◆ Dental, prescription, vision and hearing programs
- ◆ Scholarships for members and their family members
- ◆ Trauma coverage
- ◆ Plus much more!



**New mailing address:**

AFT- Lone Star College  
PO Box 310404  
Houston, Texas 77231

**We're on the Web!**

[www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)

**Call for Articles**

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your ideas. Send your articles to **John Burghduff** via e-mail: [aftlonestar@yahoo.com](mailto:aftlonestar@yahoo.com), or submit to any of the following officers.

First Name	Last Name	Officer title	Campus
John	Burghduff	President	Cy-Fair
Alan	Hall	Secretary	At-Large
Donna	Kroll	Treasurer	Houston North
Leah	Kirrell	North Harris Faculty Vice President	North Harris
Britney	Hall	North Harris Staff Vice President	North Harris
Pat	Chandler	Kingwood Staff Vice President	Kingwood
Cliff	Hudder	Montgomery Faculty Vice President	Montgomery
Martha	Neely	Montgomery Staff Vice President	Montgomery
Adrienne	Patton	Cyfair Faculty Vice President	Cy Fair
Cindy	Hoffart-Watson	Cyfair Staff Vice President	Cy Fair
Van	Piercy	Tomball Faculty Vice President	Tomball
Stephen	Washington	Houston North Faculty Vice President	Houston North
Cathleen	Quayle	System Office, Staff Vice President	System Office
Cassandra	Khatiri	University Park Faculty Vice President	University Park

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to give this message were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their situation, but assistance

ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available.

The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should

have a voice in their professional lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, AFT is there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.





# How do you want to save money today?

Saving money is ridiculously easy. Your union affiliation gives you discounts on things you need every day.

See for yourself!

## Union Members Save with Union Plus®

Ready to save on everyday expenses, like your monthly wireless phone bill, shopping, or even going to the movies? We thought so. Save on everyday things, every day!

### Shopping & Discounts | Union Plus

We've got the [wireless savings](#) for your family's needs. Visit your nearest AT&T store and show proof of union membership



[Save 30% on flowers, chocolate & gifts](#) for the holidays, and make someone's day!



Did you know you can get paid to shop? It's true. [Sign up for BeFrugal](#) and earn cash back whenever you make a purchase!



[Save at local & national restaurants!](#) Union members & their families can enjoy delicious meals and get huge discounts!



[Save big on movie tickets!](#) Union families can get discounted admission tickets to national movie theatre chains!

