



# The Advocate

Happy Holidays everyone, and welcome to the November-December Issue of The Advocate. My goal had been for us to get this out to you right after Thanksgiving, but life got in the way for those of us who put this together so I'm sorry it's a bit late. I hope you get a chance to enjoy this as your holiday reading. In case you have already left for a fantastic Christmas trip, we'll resend when the college reopens in January.

We have some exciting things to share with you. We want to point out some really promising aspects of the new Lone Star College Strategic Plan and Key Performance Indicators that directly impact employee pay and working conditions in positive ways. We want to report on some very important work being done on academic integrity in online classes. Steve Davis shares with us his latest installment of his column Dispatches from the Front, focusing on the impact of teachers. I follow with my column Know Your Rights dealing with the so-called Bathroom Bill and its impact on our college community.

We finish up with our newest column Good and Welfare. I wrote about this in our September-October issue. To help build up the union as a community, we are inviting employees to share life or work events that matter to them. We had three celebrations submitted by the time we went to print which we are proud

to share. If you would like to share a life event that matters to you, your contribution is welcome. Please email it at any time to:

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

Contributions received by February 14 will appear in our next issue!

In fact, if you have ANYTHING you'd like to contribute to The Advocate, we are always looking for guest articles, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor. Your contribution is welcome and can also be sent to [aftlonestar@yahoo.com](mailto:aftlonestar@yahoo.com).

Finally, please find here on the next page some photographs from the wonderful Fall Celebration AFT Lone Star College sponsored on November 15. We had an awesome time. We'll have another one in the Spring. Look for more details in our January-February issue!

**Have a wonderful break everyone and see you all in January!**



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2025





## The Strategic Plan, KPIs, and Employee Pay and Advancement

*Dr. John Burghduff  
LSC-CyFair*

In 1914, Henry Ford famously doubled the salary of assembly line workers at his company to \$5 per day and decreased the standard workday from 9 hours to 8. It was a bold and expensive move that instantly made the Ford Motor Company an outlier among American businesses.

Before these changes, Mr. Ford had a major problem. The annual turnover rate for employees at the car company was a whopping 370%. The work was hard. Pay was low. Employees got exhausted and walked off the job sometimes bringing the assembly line to a complete stop. Ford and his advisors took a gamble that improving pay and working conditions would result in happier and more productive workers who would stay on the job. The gamble worked. From the company's point of view, production, sales, and profits boomed. From the workers point of view, they finally had the ability to provide a good living for their families and still have some time to enjoy life.

The lesson learned is that treating employees well in terms of pay and working conditions is a moral imperative to be sure, but it is also good for business. And what's wrong with having both at the same time?

Over the last few months, Lone Star College has been looking very intentionally at where we want to go as an institution over the next five years. The Board has approved a new vision and mission statement, the Chancellor has proposed a new strategic plan, and the College's leadership team has outlined key performance indicators (KPIs for short) to make sure we're achieving those goals.

There are so many aspects of the plan that are worthy of lengthy discussion dealing with all aspects of college business. Certainly, our business is different from Ford Motors in many ways. Their objective is to sell cars. Ours is to prepare people in our community for better

lives. But, like Ford, reaching our goal depends on a stable and effective employee base. So, in this article I want to highlight and endorse specific aspects of the strategic plan and key performance indicators or KPIs that focus on employee pay and working conditions. Under Goal Number 1, KPI # 5 says "We will pay every full-time employee at this institution a livable wage by Fiscal Year 2031. This is not just a moral imperative but a business one as well. Paying every full-time employee a livable wage will not just increase productivity and efficiency for the employees we already have, it will make us more competitive in the labor market, and it will invest in our most valuable asset, our people."

"Livable wage" is a well-defined term indicating a sufficient income to pay for adequate housing, food, transportation, and other bills. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimates that a livable wage for a family in Houston consisting of two working adults and two children is around \$44,000 a year.

Lone Star College is already taking important steps to achieve this KPI. As of this very month, the college is increasing the minimum salary for full time Lone Star employees from \$29,027 to \$33,540, and the minimum hourly wage from \$10.54 to \$15.60. This first step represents a very serious investment of \$1.3 million dollars.

The commitment to go the rest of the way is truly courageous.

Complementing and elaborating on this KPI, KPI #6 establishes what labor folks like me would call a prevailing wage commitment. The text of KPI #6 is as follows:

"We will pay every full-time employee at this institution a competitive wage for higher

education in the area for that job family. We will measure competitive wage rates by dividing our wages for a particular job family by the area's average wage for that same job family in higher education. Most employees who believe they are underpaid believe they should be at the front of the line. We need a systematic way in which to prioritize who goes first, second, third, etc., as we increase the competitiveness of employee pay. This KPI will track where each employee job family ranks and the predictable order in which increases will be applied

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year to year with the goal being to achieve a ratio greater than 1.0 for all job families by 2030.”

The work described in KPI #6 is akin to work done by the Department of Labor in establishing a “prevailing wage” for all of the skilled trades like electricians, pipe fitters, HVAC technicians, etc. under a famous law known as the Davis-Bacon Act. The general idea is that, based on research, Lone Star will pay at rates that EXCEED the prevailing wages in every categories of employees by 2030.

This commitment is bold to the point of being breath taking. The Davis-Bacon act requires that employers contracted under federal contracts must pay their employees prevailing wages. A number of years ago, with the urging of the AFT and our partners in the local AFL-CIO, Lone Star voluntarily chose to require its contractors to pay prevailing wages to their employees as well. The law did not require Lone Star to do so. The law also does not require the college to pay its own employees prevailing wages. In fact, the Department of Labor doesn’t even set prevailing wages for most of the job families we would have at the college.

To my knowledge, this KPI would make us the first community college in Texas to make that commitment. Although the legal technicalities may sound dry and dusty to everyone other than a labor geek, this commitment could potentially be a game changer in a field like education where pay scales tend to be relatively low.

When Henry Ford raised wages at his car company, it forced his competitors to follow suit in order to be competitive on the labor market. The Davis-Bacon Act wasn’t passed until 1931 so the language of prevailing wage would not have been in use in 1914 but, had it been, Ford exceeded the prevailing wage, not by a little bit, but by a lot. AFT recognizes that Lone Star College does not have access to the nearly unlimited resources that the Ford Motor Company had at the time, but we urge the Board and the Administration, within prudent, responsible constraints, to swing for the fences - cautiously. At the same time, we urge employees to realize how bold and expensive this change could be and to, therefore, become expectant but remain patient.

In 1914, Ford Motor Company focused on working conditions as well as pay. An 8 hour work day, which we take for granted now, was unheard of 1914. The 8 hour work

day having been resolved years ago, the new Lone Star strategic plan and KPIs include important goals for working conditions in other ways.

Under Goal 3, Key Performance Indicator number 3 states “We will achieve an internal mobility and promotional rate of 25 percent by 2030. This KPI recognizes that our institution’s greatest asset is its people, and when opportunities for advancement are available internally, we retain talent, reward loyalty, and strengthen institutional knowledge. A healthy mobility rate signals a culture where employees see real career pathways inside the Lone Star College System.”

In addition, KPI number 5 under the same goal states “We will achieve a Leadership Pipeline where there are at least 1.5 successors identified for key positions. This KPI ensures continuity and stability by preparing the next generation of leaders in advance. Succession planning protects the institution from disruption, while also motivating employees by making advancements visible and attainable.”

Many of us on the faculty side already have our dream jobs by having the privilege and pleasure of being in the classroom so these goals may not mean much to many of us. But some are interested in becoming deans and vice presidents and these goals will be important to them.

I think the employees who will really benefit from these two goals are our staff employees. Seeing a clear path towards moving up within the institution, along with practical professional development to help them prepare for advancement, will bring hope and inspire enthusiasm.

The union is more than glad that strategic plans for Lone Star College include an emphasis on employee pay and job conditions. We will be eagerly watching and ready to offer our input and support. In so many ways, Lone Star College is already a testament to the premise that the success of an institution and the success of its employees go hand in hand. These new plans will build on what we already have and move us farther forward.



## Remote Live Proctoring of Online STEM Tests-Interview with Sarada Moturu

*Dr. John Burghduff  
LSC-CyFair*

On November 13, I had the pleasure of interviewing LSC Online Physics faculty and Chancellor's DSI/Design Lab member Prof Sarada Moturu about her work this past year regarding maintaining academic integrity in online STEM classes.

As we all know only too well, The Covid Pandemic abruptly turned all of higher education into an online-only modality. Although we are now back on campus, the percentage of our classes offered in online format has far from returned to levels that existed before the pandemic. This statement is so obvious it hardly needs documentation, but Sarada shared with me the example that, in 2019 (before the pandemic), Lone Star College as a whole – across all campuses – offered NO online sections of sophomore level Physics or Chemistry classes but in 2024, 55% to 60% of all sections of sophomore level Physics and Chemistry were online along with other upper level STEM courses.

Online classes open doors for students who might not otherwise be able to participate in higher education and there is no doubt that they are here to stay. However, this modality presents a host of challenges – challenges that are well documented – that will have to be solved if online students are going to experience educational mastery on par with their fellow students in face-to-face classes.

By far not the least of these challenges is assuring that the work that students submit in online classes truly reflects THEIR work – not the work of another human being – not the work of Chat GPT and its compatriots. LSC Online Professor Tim Mousel demonstrated in a professional development session earlier this semester how AI could be trained to take an entire online class by itself for a student. This concern is on top of worries about more traditional ways a student could be getting help like using cheat sheets, copying from a friend, or getting someone else to take a test or a whole class for them.

Cheating is lying. It is dishonest. It breaks the moral

code of every known society. However, catching cheaters and punishing them is not the primary motive, at least in my mind, for trying to stop it. To me, the greater cost is that a student who cheats in a class has learned nothing about the content. If they cheat all the way through college, they get a degree that means nothing. They will be hired by employers who, as soon as they realize the graduate is not qualified, will fire them, leaving the student jobless and unemployable. Plus, what does it do to someone psychologically in the long run if they come to believe that the only way they can be successful in life is to be dishonest?

In addition, there is danger to the reputation of Lone Star College if large number of our graduates go to a university or a job with no skills because they have cheated. The chancellor has pointed out that lack of academic integrity is potentially the greatest existential threat to the College if not resolved.

Although they have a long way to go, tools are improving to detect plagiarized and AI created content in writing assignments. However, in some disciplines, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields and other fields that are heavily mathematically driven (Accounting for example), most questions are objective and student work reveals fewer stylistic clues that cheating may be taking place. Assessments in these classes are largely test related. So, in STEM classes, Accounting and some others, academic integrity in general is largely a matter of integrity on tests.

Making sure that students haven't surreptitiously smuggled-in formula sheets or have a connection via clever technology to an outside helper in a face-to-face class is not a trivial task. In an online class, preventing and detecting cheating is vastly more complicated. Pre-Covid, all online instructors - especially in STEM and other mathematically heavy disciplines, required that students come to campus and test in one of Lone Star's testing centers. Of course, all of those testing centers closed during Covid and now they don't have near the capacity to absorb all the students.

As Sarada told me, "It was such a huge problem for us when the testing centers closed. We were so disappointed knowing that integrity is not maintained, and



we don't have any help. I noticed many full-time faculty are opting out of teaching upper level STEM courses online because of this issue. It is not just us. No college or university is beyond this now. Given we must serve the students that are in our online classes, this is where the overwhelming sadness comes in. Learning online is tempting. And with online, cheating is also tempting. The joy of reaching out to someone that we may never meet and make them successful, is becoming an impossible task".

What alternatives to ensuring test integrity exist if face-to-face proctored testing is unavailable?

Within D2L, we can employ Respondus Monitor Lock Down Browser with Webcam. This feature will make a video recording of students' faces while they are taking a test for the professor to review later. But reviewing those videos could take 56 hours of viewing time (28 students each taking 2 hours per test) per class. This is both unrealistic and after the fact. There is no way to ask the student to explain suspicious behavior in real time.

Professors can ask students to take their tests while they are monitoring live through Webex but this either creates the same time issue if each student tests separately or becomes a logistical nightmare if many students are testing at the same time.

The College can contract with a professional proctoring company like ProctorU that employs proctors to watch students individually live while they test. That particular company charges \$25 per student per hour per test. So, the proctoring cost for a single full time math professor teaching five online classes of 28 students each giving four, 2-hour tests per class would be \$28,000. It's not hard to see that when applied to LSC Online and all the online classes taught by faculty in the other seven colleges, the per semester cost of employing ProctorU universally would be in the millions of dollars.

Professors could tell the students to be on their honor, not proctor at all, and hope for the best. The cheating scandals that have taken place in the few universities around the country that maintain quaint "honor codes" show how grossly ineffective this approach is.

Chancellor Castillo created the Design Lab/DSI in Spring,

2025. Three faculty were selected and given a full course release to tackle an issue of their choice related to the success of the College. Among this faculty was Sarada Moturu. Sarada said, "As I taught Physics face to face for 11 years and then as an online faculty for 3 years, I can see the student learning being compromised. So, I focused on this topic as my Design Lab project". She set out to design and implement remote live proctoring for STEM courses among all of our 8 colleges.

When LSC Online was first opened in 2021, then Chancellor Steve Head met with the faculty in an open meeting and asked them what resources they needed. Sarada asked him, "We need help with proctoring." He set aside \$1.5 million dollars over 5 years, \$300,000 per year, for proctoring in online classes. This is a significant amount but, as we have seen, far, far too little to incorporate ProctorU in all online classes.

In her Design Lab role, Sarada decided to focus on the courses already approved for live proctoring by the curriculum teams. The Physics and Chemistry Curriculum Teams chose four classes each and Biology picked two. The Math Curriculum Team chose ALL of their classes to be covered. In addition, there are Accounting Technician classes (CPA courses) for which the State requires that all online tests have to be live proctored, so they were added to the mix. Proctored testing for all these online sections (at LSC Online and the other seven colleges) using ProctorU would have cost \$2 million per year for proctoring only two tests per class – dramatically beyond the allotted amount.

Sarada asked herself, could we feasibly bring this cost under control if we take on the task of live proctoring online tests ourselves and create a caring and student focused LSC-Proctoring Center? She worked through the following calculations:

Thanks to wage increases put into place this year under Chancellor Castillo's direction, Lone Star employed proctors are paid \$18 per hour. Using large screen monitors, one person can reasonably monitor six students at a time – a number not too hard to keep track of with large enough monitors to be able to watch carefully. Suppose a test runs two hours. The cost of hiring a proctor to oversee those six students for two hours is \$36 or \$6 per student per test. IF, in addition, the professor for the class was willing to proctor some tests as part of



their institutional service, the cost would drop to \$3 per student per test. This is significantly lower than the \$25 per student per test charged by ProctorU.

As the cost projection data showed this is achievable, here is an outline of what she implemented as a pilot for Fall, 2025:

- 1) A room has been set aside at University Park with three desk top computers with large monitors. This room is called the LSC-Proctoring Center. Paid proctors work here and students take tests remotely. Faculty who choose to volunteer to proctor can work anywhere that works for them.
- 2) Proctoring is conducted using Zoom rather than Webex because the technology is more familiar to students, thanks to Covid.
- 3) Students use their cell phone to join the Zoom meeting. They do not need a Webcam. The phone is kept to the side so the proctor can view the entire workspace around the computer on which the student is taking their test.
- 4) Although six students are testing at a time, they are taken one by one into a Zoom breakout room for check in. At this time, the proctor checks the student ID to make sure the student registered is the student taking the test, goes over the rules and procedures for the tests as they have been communicated by the professor. The check also includes an environment scan in which the students pan desk space they are working to show that there are no disallowed materials. Then the six students take their tests in the general session. They can be taken back into a breakout room if the proctor is concerned about something the student is doing or if the student is encountering a problem. LSC-Proctoring Center contacts faculty if a technical problem comes up during a test. Unacceptable/suspicious behaviors are recorded in an incident log and shared with faculty daily.
- 5) Professors set the testing rules they want. For example, whether they allow scratch paper a formula sheet or not, the type of calculator the student can use, whether there are documents to be upload into D2L at the end.
- 6) All Zoom testing sessions are recorded so faculty can review the video if they feel the need. In addition,

faculty can continue to use Respondus Monitor Lock Down Browser with Webcam and any publisher platform like Pearson MyMathLab/Mastering Physics McGraw Hill Aktiv or Cengage WebAssign to name a few.

- 7) Sarada is the designer, the project lead and one of the proctors for this pilot project. There can be up to four proctors active at a given time through the Proctoring Center. Proctors are strategically scheduled based on the number of classes testing on a given day. There may be days when no tests are scheduled and other days when all four proctors need be scheduled to meet demand.
- 8) LSC-Proctoring Center can handle 300 students/ tests per day. Students sign up for a two-hour test window. These test windows are staggered, beginning on each hour with the first slot of the day opening at 8 AM and the last one starting at 6 PM (closing at 8 PM). Additional slots are offered at 8:15AM, 10:15 AM, 9AM, 11AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM etc. Testing is available Monday through Saturday. (Note: I asked about whether students were able to work within these parameters. Our online students have gotten used to taking tests at all hours of the day and night, so this is a significant change. She said that students appreciate the convenience of taking the exams remotely and we do all we can to accommodate our students' needs. She has gotten no complaints or reports that a student couldn't find an appointment).
- 9) The software Register Blast is used for test scheduling. This software helps with test scheduling for both faculty and students and has an annual cost of \$3000. They serve over 1000 educational institutions around the country and Canada. LSC-Proctoring Center is the only institution that uses this software for remote live proctoring, and they invited Sarada to present at their annual conference.
- 10) Faculty are asked to limit the duration of their tests to 2 hours or less.
- 11) Instead of scheduling one day (24 hour) tests, faculty can keep the tests open for two days, 8 AM – 8 PM.
- 12) Math tests are recommended to be scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and all other currently covered tests (Chemistry, Physics, Biology,



and Accounting) on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday to help schedule the proctors as evenly as possible.

- 13) Tests need to be kept to one attempt only – no re-takes – to avoid overwhelming the Proctor Center.
- 14) For each class, the total number of tests should be kept to 3 or 4 TOTAL, including Final, again, to keep the load manageable.
- 15) It is highly recommended that faculty participate (two 2-hour shifts per test) in live proctoring their online tests along with the LSC-Proctoring Center. Professors can choose whatever time works for them and can proctor from anywhere. They don't have to operate in the 8 AM – 8 PM Monday – Saturday window. Time spent proctoring can be counted as part of the 30 hours required for institutional service.

I noted that, in a face to face class with two-hour tests, a professor would proctor each test for two hours. This system asks them to spend four hours. That is more, but far less than the time spent watching videos of 28 individual students. Speaking only for myself, that does not seem like an unreasonable ask. Each professor would have to decide this for themselves in order to participate.

Sarada explained "We can give a review or answer their questions 30 mins prior to starting their tests and be there as they take their tests. This is an opportunity for us to meet our online students, show we care about them, we take maintaining academic integrity seriously, and we are willing to roll up our sleeves and be true partners in finding a solution."

For Fall Semester 2025, 35 upper-level STEM sections are participating in this live proctoring pilot project. They account for about 25% of the sophomore online STEM classes offered systemwide in this targeted list of classes. As of the time I spoke with Sarada in mid-November, they finished live proctoring 1750 tests with an anticipation of 2500 total tests for this semester. She estimated the total cost of the program for this semester with all tests live proctored through LSC-Proctoring Center will be \$23,000 versus \$95,200 if we had contracted the same services for just 2 tests from ProctorU.

I expressed my concern about whether this program

could be scaled up because there are clearly many more sections that might want to use the program. She stated they can handle up to 300 tests per day and need a bigger room and add more tutors as they scale up to accommodate 200 sections. Expenses for proctors would increase proportionally. The current plans are to scale up gradually and continue to improve the process.

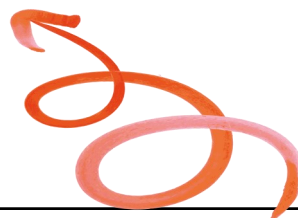
For Spring Semester, 2026, there will be a total of 423 eligible online sections of STEM and Accounting classes. If the 50% participation goal is reached, the cost for the semester will be \$141, 792. Another 50% of the eligible sections for Summer, 2026 will cost \$98, 112. Altogether, this keeps the cost below the Proctoring Center's allocation of \$300,000 with all our online STEM and ACCT 2301 sections being live proctored.

Starting in the Spring, Sarada will be returning to the classroom but is committed to continuing her involvement with the Proctoring Center. Oversight will transfer to Dr. Gerald Napoles and Senior Vice Chancellor Nancy Molina. The hope is that live proctoring will expand to higher percentages of the currently eligible courses and that other disciplines may want to get involved as well.

Over time, the system will surely evolve as situations change. Disciplines that rely more heavily on essays, projects, and presentations for evaluation will find different solutions to the challenge of academic integrity. I want to keep watching. In fact, although I'm not teaching online this spring, I plan to volunteer with the Proctoring Center at least a couple of times to experience it for myself.

Sarada spoke about being "intoxicated with gratitude" for the opportunity to get this project off the ground.

"Online tests live proctoring helps with maintaining academic integrity", she said. "We are doing the right things as this will ensure students are learning and earning their grades and prepared to be successful in their transfer to four-year universities," And "It is just one of the most humbling things that I am doing. I am part of the solution. I'm not part of the problem anymore."







## Dispatches from the Front #16 "Teachers"

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

I'm tired. I always am this time each Fall. And deservedly so, as for anyone who does this job the right way, weariness is practically a work requirement. This stretch just before Thanksgiving is for me like the Hillary Step for Mount Everest climbers, a steep vertical just before reaching the summit. At this altitude the air is thin, the upward progress more labored, but the end is visible and recovery comes soon thereafter.

At stressful points, it helps me to think about inspirational teachers. I was with some of them a couple of Saturdays ago at our AFT social in Spring. Over tacos and drinks, we celebrated more than forty years of our union's history, a timespan during which our local grew from a mere handful of members to its current hundreds. Among the retirees in attendance was Alan Hall, our president for multiple decades. Alan knew that militantly defending employee rights was not a popularity contest. The disparagement that he received from some administrators was a measure of his effectiveness. Alan did his union work alongside the incredible demands of multiple sections of freshman English, demands in regard to grading papers and teaching writing that would break a normal human. Former history professor, Allen Vogt, was also there. I was in awe of him from the days he was a graduate student a few years ahead of me at the University of Houston. Upon completing his dissertation, Allen got hired at the then North Harris County College. When I started there as an adjunct, I observed him transform as he prepared for the classroom, always dressed to the nines and scented from a bottle of cologne he kept stashed inside his office. It reminded me of how Keith Richards once said he saw Roy Orbison grow in stature right before his eyes as he left the dressing room and headed for the stage.

"At stressful points, it helps me to think about inspirational teachers. I was with some of them a couple of Saturdays ago at our AFT social in Spring. Over tacos and drinks, we celebrated more than forty years of our union's history, a timespan during which our local grew from a mere handful of members to its current hundreds."

It was great as well to see Bob Locander, who bequeathed me this column when he retired after COVID. I always shared with Bob intense interests in books and baseball. How often I would see him checking out the latest book reviews or take note of his current reading when we met to catch up at Starbucks. Bob held his Government students to the highest standards and assigned them titles that elevated their intellects. He was also one sweet outfielder. I was never embarrassed to ride the bench and await my innings when I played on his softball team that was in a league several cuts above my normal competitive level. As soon as I started at the new Kingwood campus, I joined the AFT. Bob counseled me to keep my membership secret as our top leadership was then notoriously anti-union. Only once I earned a multi-year contract should I become visibly active. As Lou Reed once said, "those were different times."

These men I was honored to call colleagues. Other great teachers I knew as their student in my own college days. One of those was Tom Morgan, who was my main professor in the UH history department. Dr. Morgan was a specialist in labor and Western history, an old school militant when he taught those subjects. He told us a story of growing up in Oregon and as a kid, unwittingly crossing a drug store picket line with a friend to buy a soda. A relative grabbed him by the collar and gave him a royal chewing out about not respecting a work stoppage. Dr. Morgan was a brilliant leader in graduate seminars, the kind that met weekly for three hours. He smoked through them incessantly, the ashtray full of cigarette butts by the end of the evening. When we returned from a short break, Dr. Morgan would come back from his office down the hallway with a cup full of some kind of clear liquid. I don't know what he was drinking, only that he got more eloquent as the night grew later. By this point in the early 1980s, smoking had been banned in classes. Dr. Morgan notoriously kept indulging. The story circulated that some hotshot from The Daily Cougar who wanted to be the next Bob Woodward was determined to bust him in the act while he lectured in the Arnold Hall auditorium. The reporter brought a photographer to get some action shots but



the camera man was apparently unable to get any usable pictures due to the clouds of smoke that surrounded the podium! Dr. Morgan chaired my committee and led the questioning when I took my doctoral oral examination. I treasure the moment he came out of the seminar room to inform me that I had passed with distinction and invited me to go with him for some celebratory drinks. At a neighborhood bar, we talked about teaching the U.S. survey. I told him that I was struggling in my own initial classes to get past Vietnam. He said, "Don't worry about it, Steve---I never get past Korea."

**Ultimately, it is in the classroom that Harry's influence on me continues. I remember his humility, the sight of him in a favored dark green corduroy jacket in someone's living room or in the student center during a meeting. As we would go around the circle for introductions, he would always say, "I'm a teacher."**

Another unforgettable classroom presence was Louis Kestenberg, a specialist in the history of Modern Europe. I don't know what it was about him that was so compelling; he frankly wasn't a very good lecturer. There was just something about his air and his commitment to learning that captivated me and made me want to excel in his classes. Dr. Kestenberg told his students that he read a book every weekend. That book length reading was the Sunday New York Times. Because of him, I started driving to a downtown newsstand on Sunday mornings to get a copy. There would always be a few dozen people waiting for the paper to be delivered. Did it cost maybe a dollar in those days? Whatever, it was worth it. I started reading the paper closely for its domestic political coverage and its international news. I tell my students every semester about how Dr. Kestenberg introduced me to the Sunday Times, hoping some of those seeds will take root. More than fifty years later, when I teach the coming of World War II, I pull from Dr. Kestenberg. He used for example a simple formula to convey how much more intense and deadly the German variant of right-wing extremism was compared to its Italian predecessor when he wrote on the board that "fascism plus anti-Semitism equals Nazism." Not a bad summation.

Finally, there was Harry Walsh, who I was honored to have not only as a professor but also as my friend. Harry was one of the most brilliant men I have ever known. He had degrees in history, Russian, and histori-

cal linguistics. I first encountered him in intro Russian and went on to take him for Russian literature in translation. My first course with him in the latter nearly killed me, as we read ten novels that probably averaged five hundred pages---the usual suspects such as Tolstoi and Dostoevsky along with Gogol, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and others. What a joy it was to discover that Harry was not only a great teacher and a first-rank intellectual but a sports nut as well. His first love was baseball, expressed as a boy for his hometown Ft. Worth Cats of the Texas League. I would hang out in his office sometimes and commiserate with him over the mis-

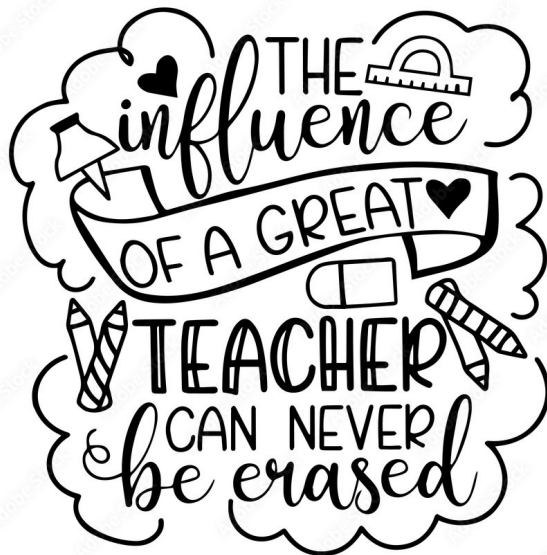
fortunes of our Astros and Oilers. That was after I recruited Harry into a political group that was launched in New York City in late 1973, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. The DSOC was led by Michael Harrington, famous for his best-selling poverty exposé, *The Other America*, which influenced policy under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. This was long before anyone had ever heard of Bernie Sanders, AOC, or Zohran Mamdani and democratic socialism was certainly a tough sell on a Texas campus in those days of the Cold War and Richard Nixon. Conservatives naturally reviled us but liberal Democrats were often suspicious despite our solid work for local candidates. Our sworn enemies, however, were the various stripes of campus communists. Harry had lived in Moscow as a Fulbright scholar in the late 60s. He knew firsthand the utter bankruptcy of the Soviet system and its offspring in hellholes like Cuba, equating Leonid Brezhnev and his ilk to a cynical band of geriatric Mafiosi. It drove the local Leninists crazy to have us as rivals capable of calling out their absurdities.

Ultimately, it is in the classroom that Harry's influence on me continues. I remember his humility, the sight of him in a favored dark green corduroy jacket in someone's living room or in the student center during a meeting. As we would go around the circle for introductions, he would always say, "I'm a teacher." He never cited his academic credentials, scholarly publications, or any other professional distinctions. I still



sometimes use words I learned from him or talk about books or ideas I discussed with him in my teaching, sending him a cosmic smile whenever that happens. I wish I could tell Harry now the difference he made.

In 1941, a writer from Rockdale, Texas named George Sessions Perry won the National Book Award for his now practically forgotten novel, *Hold Autumn in Your Hand*. It's a brilliant Depression-era story of a share-cropper named Sam Tucker and his quotidian struggles to support his family on the land. Despite crushing poverty and lure of a potentially more secure life in the big city (in this case, Houston), the protagonist loves his work as a farmer, the ability each Fall to literally hold the fruits of his labor in his palm in the form of the cotton that has resulted from his own sweat and ingenuity. We teachers don't have that same tangible opportunity; we don't get to see the ultimate product of our toil. We can take comfort though in the memory of the teachers who shaped us in our own tutelage, who gave us the tools and inspiration to lift up our students over the course of our own careers. Many of those students will remember us in the same way and express similar affection. That being said, let's now bend our efforts to bringing this latest crop in.



## The Bathroom Bill

# Know Your Rights



**By: Dr. John Burghdoff,  
Professor of Mathematics. LSC– CyFair**

Have you noticed that all of the restroom signs on our campuses have been changed from “Men” or “Women” to “Male” or “Female”?

This expenditure of employee time and tax-payer money is a state mandated consequence of Senate Bill 8, a piece of legislation passed during last summer's special session which went into effect on December 1.

SB 8<sup>1</sup> is the so-called Bathroom Bill which requires transgender people to use the bathrooms and dressing rooms corresponding to their gender at birth. Violations will be accompanied by hefty fines to be paid, not by the individuals involved, but by the college itself.

The stated impetus of this bill is to protect cis-gender women and girls (persons assigned as females at birth who identify as females) from trans-gender women (persons assigned as males at birth who have transitioned or are transitioning to female). An important study by the Williams Institute at the UCLA College of Law<sup>2</sup> demonstrates that

- 1) “There is no evidence that allowing transgender people access to bathrooms aligning with their gender identity jeopardizes safety and privacy.
- 2) “Research consistently finds that transgender people report negative experiences like harassment and violence when accessing bathrooms.
- 3) “Transgender people face risks when required to use bathrooms according to their sex at birth.”



I know there are many strongly held points of view related to this issue. I understand that there are people who feel heightened anxiety in public places, and I truly sympathize with their feeling of distress. I really do. It is sad that, although solid research could help assuage those fears, some prefer to exploit those fears to advance an agenda.

What distresses me is that, amidst all the heightened rhetoric, the humanity of real people gets forgotten.

I served for many years as chair of the mathematics department at LSC CyFair. During my tenure we employed two transgender adjunct instructors both of whom were talented, dedicated, and caring teachers. Every semester between the end of the pandemic and this past spring, I have had at least one transgender student in my classes. This is not surprising since transgender persons make up about 1% of the population and faculty generally teach over 100 students per semester. All of these are real people here at our college in search of a better life. They don't want to make trouble, but they have the same basic biological needs that we all do, and they just need to meet those needs in peace.

Do you know what I really wish?

I wish that every person associated with Lone Star College could sit down for coffee with a transgender man or woman to get to know them. Not that I would want the transgender person to be forced to explain or defend their existence and rights. That is a stressful situation in which many minorities find themselves often. What I mean is that they just talk about school, or families, or things they're interested in. What is sorely lacking right now is the ability to see our fellow human beings as fellow human beings. A few cups of coffee with an honest and earnest desire to truly see and understand another person would dissolve so many prejudices.

I know a fine social worker and therapist who is a member of my church who also happens to be a transgender man. We have a strong enough personal relationship that I could ask them (preferred pronoun) what they think about SB 8. They said that, although they would hope for so much more, knowing if there is a safe place they could visit the bathroom wherever they are would be a decent start. That does not seem like asking too much.

**I am both grateful and proud that Lone Star College made a conscious and proactive decision a few years ago that all new college buildings would include at least one gender neutral single occupancy bathroom and that, as soon as practical, all existing buildings would be retrofitted to include at least one.**

I am both grateful and proud that Lone Star College made a conscious and proactive decision a few years ago that all new college buildings would include at least one gender neutral single occupancy bathroom and that, as soon as practical, all existing buildings would be retrofitted to include at least one. In fact, if this effort is not already complete system wide, I believe it is very close. These bathrooms provide a safe and dignified alternative for transgender students and employees and also are a benefit to others, including parents who need to bring small children on campus, and disabled persons who need

assistance and have caregivers of a different gender. Gender neutral single occupancy bathrooms are explicitly permitted under SB 8.

I have shared with Chancellor Castillo that it would be good practice to publicize the location of these bathrooms as widely as possible.

Here is what I have decided to do as my own tiny part of the puzzle.

In my syllabi for spring semester I am going to include a statement like this:

"Many buildings on Lone Star College property have at least one single occupancy bathroom available for anyone to use. The closest such bathroom to our classroom is on the second floor of this building across the hall from room HSC2 248."







There is nothing in this statement that the proponents of SB 8 could point to as a violation of their law. Many if not most students will read past that passage without considering why it is there. But I think it will bring relief to that one transgender student who will now be feeling singled out and bullied by their own government. I wish we could shield them all from the ill-informed discrimination they endure, but I am grateful that Lone Star has made a commitment to welcome them and respect their dignity.



## Footnotes:

1. Senate Bill 8 text: <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=892&Bill=SB8>

Select the tab "text" and then choose the version labelled "enrolled".

2. "Safety and Privacy in Public Restrooms and Other Gendered Facilities", report of the Williams Institute, College of Law, University of California Los Angeles, February, 2025

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/safety-in-restrooms-and-facilities/>

In case you never got to read our previous issues of *The Advocate*, (along with all of the back issues of the newsletter going back to 1979) Please visit us at:

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

Select the dropdown menu at "News" then select "Archives of *The Advocate*."

## Good and Welfare

- 1) Congratulations to AFT Lone Star College members **Gloria Kessler** (LSC-Montgomery) and **Cathleen Quayle** (System Office – The Woodlands) on graduating from the Academy. The Academy is committed to growing, supporting and celebrating Lone Star College's current and emerging leaders by encouraging Fellows to lead from where they are. We are proud of Gloria and Cathleen as well as all others in this year's graduating class.
- 2) Congratulations to proud Grandma and LSC-CyFair Professor **Kim Lane** on the birth of her grandson Levi Ian Palmquist, born on 11/18/2025 at 8:46 AM, 20.75 inches long, 8 lbs 10.3 oz; proud parents are Madison & Ian Palmquist.
- 3) AFT Lone Star College President **Dr. John Burghduff** is celebrating 50 Years in Teaching. He started his career as a substitute math teacher at Clear Lake High School in 1975 while still a student there! Since then, he has taught at Texas A&M University, the Ohio State University, Whetstone High School (Columbus, OH), San Jacinto College – South Campus, the University of Houston, Houston Community College, Strayer University, and MOST IMPORTANTLY Lone Star College – Kingwood (1992 – 2003) and Lone Star College – CyFair (2003 – present).

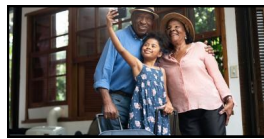


## AFT Discounts & Savings: Travel and Vacation Perks Spotlight!

**HOLIDAYS** are around the corner!  
AFT can help you save  
on vacation and travel plans!

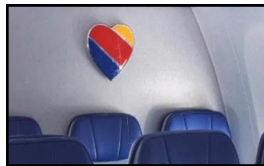
### HOTEL DISCOUNTS

As an AFT member, you can choose from two options for hotel discounts—Hilton and Wyndham properties. You will save up to 20% off the 'best available rate' at over 9,000 participating Wyndham hotels worldwide; and 12% chain-wide discount at all global Hilton hotels.



### SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

AFT members can receive discounts on domestic flights through our SWABIZ® account. SWA is offering an 8% discount off Business Select® fares, 6% discount off Anytime fares and a 3% discount off select Wanna Get Away® fares for travel, along with other benefits. (For members only; login required)



### VACATION TOURS

Take the vacation of your dreams. Save on travel destinations around the world using your AFT discount.



### CAR RENTAL

AFT members and their families save up to 25 percent with car rental discounts.



### THEME PARKS

Members can receive great discounts on water and theme park admissions, including Disney, Universal Studios, Six Flags Sea World and many more.



### ENTERTAINMENT & SHOPPING

Union members and their families can save big with discounts on shopping, restaurants, movie & concert tickets, and more!



## AFT MEMBERS:

### DO YOU HAVE HOUSEHOLD DEBT?

Get the funds you need today!

Texas AFT  
A Union of Professionals

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- Payments made over 16 months\*
- Biweekly payments of \$75.00\*
- Apply regardless of your credit score

The Texas American Federation of Teachers has partnered with BMG Money. Get access to reliable, affordable online installment loans to help you regardless of your credit history.

[BMG Money - Affordable loans and financial wellness solutions for employees and retirees](#)

Sign up now at

[app.bmgmoney.com/signup](http://app.bmgmoney.com/signup) and **TYPE** "Texas American Federation of Teachers" as the name of your employer

### DO YOU HAVE STUDENT DEBT?

#### LOWER MONTHLY PAYMENTS

**Enroll in income-driven repayment (IDR):** IDR is a free federal program where repayment plans are based on your personal income. Summer helps find the best IDR plan to lower your monthly payments (with possible forgiveness as well).

#### LOAN FORGIVENESS

**Certify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF):** You may qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), a program that will forgive ALL of your remaining loan balance after ten years. In order to enroll in PSLF, you must also be enrolled in an IDR

This is a **FREE** benefit  
for **AFT Members!**  
[Join today!](#)

## Summer

- My Plan
- My Student Loans
- Tools
- Income-Driven Repayment
- Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Forgiveness Finder
- Refinancing
- Extra Payments
- Resource Center
- Support



**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 on issues in the workplace, 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 together and 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.

If you need help with an issue or conflict at work, we will be there for you. Join not only for the peace of mind at work, but because you embrace the values we embrace!

**Let's advocate together!**

**BECOME A  
MEMBER**  
JOIN TODAY!

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

**SIGN UP TODAY**

AFT Lone Star College

**SCAN ME!**



*A Union of Professionals*

## AFT-Lone Star College

- \$8 million in professional occupational liability insurance (in case you get sued)
- Local staff and leaders ready to assist you when you need job-related help and information
- Legal defense funds (in case you need an attorney)
- \$36,250 Accidental Death & dismemberment policy
- Strong leaders and lobbyists advocating for your professional rights at local, state, and national levels
- \$5000 free term life insurance for your 1st year of membership
- AFT PLUS savings and discounts for you and your family
- Professional educational resources and publications
- No conflict of interest-Administrators cannot join
- We are strong, active, & vocal. AFT-Lone Star is the best organization to represent you at work!
- Pay your membership dues via bank draft or credit card by signing up online:

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



# 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
- \$30,000 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

### 25-26 Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$51.50
Full-time Professional Staff	\$33.25
Full-time Support Staff	\$33.25
Adjunct Faculty	\$20.12
Part-time Staff	\$20.12

### 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)



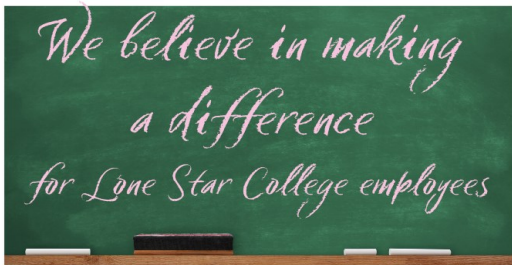


**JOIN AFT - LONE STAR TODAY!**

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



**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 reach out to them!

See back page of this publication for a list of our officers.

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

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

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
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- ◆ 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	President Emeritus	At-Large
Earl	Brewer	Secretary	At-Large
Erik	Oslund	Treasurer	Montgomery
Travis	Scott	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
Dierdre	Hayes-Cootz	Tomball Staff Vice President	Tomball
Cathleen	Quayle	System Office, Staff Vice President	System Office
Katie	Truax	University Park Faculty Vice President	University Park
Hilary	Harris	Online College Faculty Vice President	Online College

**Our AFT Lone Star Organizers are on the campuses regularly!**

Daler Wade	dalerwadeaft@gmail.com	Cyfair, Tomball, Creekside, Cypress, Fairbanks, Fallbrook, UP, Westway, Online, Process Tech
Dee Williams	Dee.Aftlonestar@gmail.com	Kingwood, North Harris, Montgomery, Atascocita, Conroe, E. Aldine, Greenspoint, Victory, Westway, System Office

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.

