



The Advocate

Education for Democracy—Democracy for Education

The Millennials Once Again



As we continue our year long discussion of the current student population and the concerns they present to our faculty, we turn our attention to methodology, particularly the way we now test our students. The following article is a well reasoned and perhaps controversial look at how we now evaluate student work. PG, editor

Some Thoughts on Literacy

As a graduate student in English in the mid-1970's at UT Austin, I taught the standard two composition courses every semester while working on my dissertation. In 1976 or 1977, our department got a request from the Chemical Engineering Department. One of their professors, an Englishman named Michael Leesly, wanted an English grad student assigned to his introductory freshman course for majors. I quickly volunteered, and over the next two semesters as an assistant, I had a wonderful introduction to the notion of Writing across the Curriculum. The first time I heard Michael tell a large lecture section that their writing skills were at least as important as their engineering and math skills, I realized he was serious. I remember, often over 30 years, the surprise on the faces of many freshmen when they were told that, as beginning engineers, 90% of their work would be writing and 10% actual engineering.



During the class meeting before writing assignments, I ran the class while the professor sat on the front row. I did the usual stuff about organization, error avoidance, etc. and then marked the essays just as I would in my own Comp I classes. He, of course, took care of the math and other material that I knew precious little about and then assigned the grades to the essays. My comments and evaluation on the papers, I soon realized, greatly determined the grades on the individual essays. After the essays were returned to the students, I

would discuss the specific writing problems encountered in that particular essay assignment. This sincere commitment to the importance of writing skills for a prospective engineer was my introduction to the idea of Writing Across the Curriculum. We co-wrote a paper published soon after, "All a Chemical Engineer Does is Write." Engineering Education (Fall 1978). The pun was his as I recall. This article was not that long after the introduction in 1972 of the Scantron form (named after the company that made them). Three decades and a bit later (24 Feb 2006) The Chronicle of Higher Education printed an article by two George Mason University history professors. The cover of Section B (The Chronicle Review) looks like this –

- The Multiple-Choice Test Is on Its Deathbed Because:
- It does not measure student learning
 - Test takers can guess the answers
 - PDA's or other hand-held devices can provide the answers
 - All of the above

This article, I think, is essential reading for all of us involved in giving tests of any kind, not just, obviously, those in the social science disciplines. Cohen and Rosenzweig are co-authors of Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web (U of Penn 2005). I will quote part of their thesis:

[D]igital technology ... undermines the very nature of multiple-choice exams. As the calculator forever alters

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Adjunct Faculty and part-time employees, if you were required to attend civil rights training without compensation, please be sure to see page 6.



The Millennials Once Again (cont'd)

mathematical education— eventually muscling its way into the test room when it became clear that long division had become a useless relic of the past—what if modern technology is about to make the former of these tests as quaint as a slide rule? (B6).

The culprit is the ubiquitous cell phone and its ability to connect with other modern technologies—notably the World Wide Web. I quote again,

Those technological developments are likely to bring the multiple-choice test to the brink of obsolescence, mounting a substantial challenge to the presentation of history—and other disciplines—as a set of facts or one-sentence interpretations and to the rote learning that inevitably goes along with such an approach. (B6).



These comments are followed by a history of multiple-choice testing and the rationale behind it—“to make tests cheaper and faster to grade” (B6).

They next explain how, even though much of what is found on Google is “hopelessly unbelievable and beside the point,” that this situation will not always be the case. Thus, soon students will be able to extract enough meaningful information to perform satisfactorily on a multiple-choice exam. This section (B7) needs to be read in its entirety and is alarmingly convincing.

Continuing with their analogy to the calculator, they argue that, as the web continues its rapid growth and improvement, students would be freed to work on “more complex and important aspects” (B8) rather

than concentrate on rote learning and memorization. They will, in a few years be able to access sufficient “information to retrieve even a fairly sophisticated answer from the Web” (B8).

Next come examples of how “ease of measurement—not priority of subject-matter understanding”—determines much testing rationale (B8). It obviously requires more time to grade an essay than it does to use a grading machine. They argue, quite sensibly, that “politicians who insist on raising the ‘stakes’ in standardized testing” (which may soon be on the way to colleges) “need to provide the funds for people rather than machines to do the grading” (B8). Given the recent history of legislative support of higher education and all the babble about “accountability,” I think we all know how likely it is that this increased funding will appear; an unfunded mandate headed down from Austin is, I would say, much more likely. Their final sentence needs to be quoted:

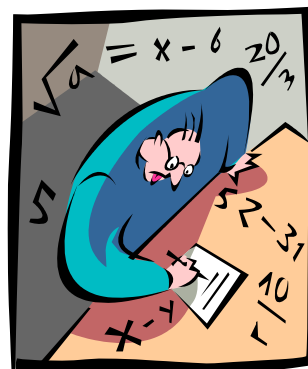
If we are going to continue to insist on having machines grade our students, then we should expect that they are going to insist on being able to answer exam questions using the machines in their pockets. (B8)

I hope that by giving all this (necessary) attention to the points made by Professors Cohen and Rosenzweig, I have not abandoned my original point—made, I hope, by my personal, if ancient anecdote: that Writing across the Curriculum may be one solution to the nightmare of future classrooms in which machines do both the test-taking and the test-evaluating/grading.

My hope is that this article will energize the defenders of multiple-choice tests and machine grading to engage in dialogue with neo-Luddites

such as myself and, I hope, with some others in the beginning of our inter-campus dialogue about the possibilities of a renewed interest in Writing across the Curriculum. Perhaps we can move from a mutual commiseration about the dismal state of our students’ writing to some constructive inter-department and inter-campus discussion of ways to rescue them from the horrors of “teaching the test,” standardized testing—machine-graded (and perhaps, soon, machine-taken!). We need to re-emphasize the importance of writing intelligibly in the power dialect of standard American English and critical thinking / analyzing / arguing. All these skills are important in the 21st century to our students as employees, consumers, voters, and all-around productive citizens. These skills have not been, and will not be, diminished by our ever-increasing reliance on machines no matter how sophisticated and time-saving!

Writing across the Curriculum would probably be a lot of trouble to a lot of people and, possibly, not even applicable in all disciplines, but I think most of us would agree that our students are worth the effort.



Marvin Williams, Ph.D.
Professor of English, NHC





SACS Revisited, or It's Worse than We Thought

In the January/February 2006 issue of The Advocate, we reported an aberration regarding faculty credentials at Tomball College. In 2003, a Tomball dean wrote a letter of exception justifying a faculty member's teaching outside his field in a second area for which the teacher has no graduate hours. The rationale, weak at best, included the following: the faculty member has a wide range of experience; the course work in the teacher's original discipline included some focus on the second discipline in which he desired to teach; the teacher had done extensive personal research and travel related to the second discipline; the teacher owns numerous books related to the second discipline. The exception was approved, and the faculty member has been teaching in the second discipline for three years. College publications have listed the faculty member as "Professor of [the second discipline]," all of this in spite of the fact that SACS insists that college faculty have a master's degree and eighteen graduate hours in any field in which they teach.



Last semester, the department chair, supervising the disciplines in which the faculty member has been teaching, declined to assign the faculty member any more classes in the second discipline. As a result, the chair was threatened by Dr. Judy Murray, Vice President of Academic and Student Development at Tomball. Dr. Murray alleged insubordination and suggested that the chair resign. Dr. Hawkins, President of Tomball,



supported Dr. Murray's position but went one step further by dismissing the chair from his chair responsibilities. Both Dr. Murray and Dr. Hawkins declined our offer to comment on the situation.

This turn of events is ironic considering SACS is abundantly clear on its eighteen graduate hour requirement for qualified faculty. More irony lies in a document titled "Tomball Values Statements" which includes comments such as, "Provides and expects quality and integrity," and "Protects academic integrity." One cannot help but wonder why the Tomball administration would so emphatically take such a stand. It is an affront to faculty who worked hard to get the credentials in our respective fields. It is an affront to the mission statement of the college district. It is an affront to Tomball students. This issue is not just a Tomball issue; it is a district issue. One cannot help but wonder why district administration has looked the other way.



The issue may be bigger than it first appeared for the district. I visited on this topic recently with Roger Jay, Professor of Math at Tomball. Roger chairs the Tomball Faculty Senate Rights and Responsibilities Committee which is investigating the issues regarding this letter of exception. Roger was aware that Austin Community College (student population of 30,000) had problems with credentialing in their



last SACS visit, so he contacted the faculty member there who chaired ACC's SACS Committee. She reported that the visiting committee found that ACC's credential records, which included 147 letters of exception, were in such bad shape the committee could not proceed. The committee returned in six months and discovered several more problems and delayed again. ACC hired a consultant to help them get their credentialing in order. When the dust settled, ACC lost about 200 adjuncts who did not meet SACS requirements. Letters of exception were reduced from 147 to less than 30. ACC's credentialing process was in such disarray that the college created a committee to review all faculty credentials.



Roger Jay reports that, with a student population of 30,000 to 40,000, NHMCCD has 239 letters of exception in place, 92 more than ACC. That number combined with the situation at Tomball is enough to give us pause regarding NHMCCD's upcoming SACS visit. How many more letters of exception are problematic? This situation could prove particularly embarrassing for Dr. Pickelman who is currently Vice Chair of the SACS Board of Trustees and will assume the duties of Chair in January 2007.



How did the district get into such a position? How could the Tomball administrators make the decisions and take the actions they did? Their behavior contradicts much of what we in academia represent. In the course of these events, a department chair was fired. As we indicated in the last issue, it is time for some accountability.

Alan Hall



Point/Counterpoint: An Exchange of Focus



“[Culture is] a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.” Matthew Arnold

The Jim Crow System and NHMCCD

Recently, it occurred to me that those of us who teach US History within the NHMCCD system have a marvelous teaching opportunity. When, in HIST 1302, we teach our students about the social conditions that led to the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, we can use our own District as a concrete example of the separate and unequal educational facilities that Chief Justice Earl Warren so eloquently condemned as unconstitutional.

As a history professor at North Harris College, I wish to extend a formal invitation to my peers at our sister colleges to organize field trips for their students to come and compare the facilities to which they are accustomed to the facilities at NHC. We will cheerfully guide them to the one remaining functional elevator in the Academic Building so they can observe the quaint overhead projectors in tile-floored classrooms, the thin walls that seem built to amplify sounds in adjacent classrooms, and dilapidated computers in student labs and faculty offices. No doubt, historians at the other colleges will welcome similar field trips for NHC history students. To drive the lesson home, history professors could show their students demographic data that highlight the problem. The chart on page 5, adapted from the Credit Student Profile available on the District Web site, should stimulate discussion



As I see it, none of this requires NHMCCD history professors to impugn the motives of District administrators. As the recent film, “Rabbit Proof Fence,” powerfully demonstrates, administrators can mean well without recognizing that the effects of their decisions may be injurious to the very minority groups they seek to help. Perhaps most importantly, this lesson will help NHMCCD history professors teach students that the abolition of the legally mandated Jim Crow system did not, in and of itself, end de facto discrimination against minority groups. And perhaps it will encourage all of us, both students and faculty, to think more deeply about the unintended consequence of seemingly innocent choices.

For decades, our society has debated the causes of de facto segregation, a phenomenon that exists in urban colleges and public school systems all over the country.

(Cont. on pg.5)

North Harris College: Dowager Queen

I love North Harris College, and so, obviously, does Jim Good. I cherish every square inch of the campus, whether it is the somewhat tattered Academic Building, built 31 years ago, or the bright, shiny, new Technology Building, opened only last year. When Academic was in construction in 1975, none of us knew that those few thousand square feet of “schoolhouse” would evolve into 1400 square miles of North Harris Montgomery Community College District, one of the finest of its kind in the United States. My college is the founding parent, a school whose reputation for excellence would grow and whose students would succeed to the point that the larger community was willing to support and pay for four more colleges and numerous centers covering, and I know I’m repeating, over 1400 square miles. I refer to my college as the dowager queen because I think we old timers remember her beginnings with the fondness the British always felt for their recently deceased Dowager Queen Elizabeth (“Queen Mum”) who was famous for her courage and conviction during World War II, who remained in London during the Blitz and walked the ruined streets with her husband, King George VI, maintaining a very British stiff upper lip, a smile, and a “we will prevail” attitude. All of her life the people of the UK referred to Queen Elizabeth as “one of us.”



North Harris College deserves the same reverence and gratitude from the citizens of our community, academic or otherwise. When I arrived on this campus in 1979, my college was a collection of three buildings with a snack bar and a “libraryette.” In fact, my first “other duty as assigned” was to collect a bibliography of the scholarly books we needed to support the literary research done in English 1302. At the end of my efforts (done first by hand, of course, with a card catalogue and then a typewriter), I gave a very startled first Dean of Instruction a list of 3,000 titles. I don’t know if we ever got all of the titles, but I do know we have a very fine, very modern library of which I am immodestly proud. Over the next decades NHC educated hundreds of thousands of students and in conjunction with our sister colleges made our reputation what it is today.

(Cont. on pg.5)





Point/Counterpoint: An Exchange of Focus, cont'd

The Jim Crow System and NHMCCD

In the meantime, millions of minority students have attended oldest educational facilities and continue to do so. Americans have also disputed the extent to which that reality relegates those students to a substandard education, although there is less discussion of whether or not students living in suburban areas and bedroom communities should, by default, have access to the newest facilities with the latest and greatest technology. Although some may wish to continue those debates, why not alleviate de facto discrimination now by committing NHMCCD to the equalization of educational facilities for all? Doing so would allow our District to transform a problem into an opportunity by embracing the American ideal that all people deserve an equal chance to succeed in life.



Jim Good
Chair, Department of Social Sciences
NHC

North Harris College: Dowager Queen of NHMCCD

OUR MUTUAL POINT. We have a general bond election on May 13th with early voters able to vote from May 1 to May 9 at the polling centers on all the colleges and centers. A bond issue of 249.6 million is offered. There will be no increase (not one penny) in local taxes since the geographic growth of our district and subsequent larger tax base will cover the increase. The division of funds is allocated using this format: North Harris College, 52 million; Montgomery College, 47.3 million; Tomball College, 46.9 million; CyFair College, 44.1 million; Kingwood College, 35.5 million; contingency expenses and bond finance cost, 9.5 million; District-wide security, IT, and land acquisition, 9.2 million; District Office, 4.6 million (numbers from Judy Stubblefield, District Office). The money is badly needed for renovation, new equipment, new classrooms, and other expansion. The entire community will benefit when this bond election passes.

Pat Gray, Professor of English, North Harris College

The Advocate, representing the AFT, strongly urges you to make the effort to vote for the bond issue. Again, it will not add a penny to your current taxes. Please vote yes. The Dowager Queen and all her family need this money to continue to educate the people of our community. Thank you. PG

North Harris Montgomery Community College District
Credit Student Profile
Comparing Spring 2005 to Spring 2006

	North Harris		Kingwood		Tomball		Montgomery		Cy-Fair	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
All Students Served	11,030	10,650	6,588	6,688	7,365	7,648	7,330	7,775	9,221	9,993
Ethnicity										
White	3,894	3,576	4,484	4,282	4,997	5,031	5,500	5,706	4,447	4,646
Black	2,586	2,527	668	698	600	653	470	536	987	1,026
Hispanic	2,883	2,914	910	1,021	1,007	1,086	885	993	2,139	2,419
Asian	781	775	205	213	380	434	206	243	898	963
Other	886	858	321	474	381	444	269	297	750	939
Total Non-White	7,136	7,074	2,104	2,406	2,368	2,617	1,830	2,069	4,774	5,347
% Non-White	65	66	32	36	32	34	25	27	52	54



Appropriate Compensation

A curious thing happened regarding NHMCCD's renewal of liability insurance. The District recently spent a considerable sum defending and ultimately settling a civil rights case filed against an administrator, an agent of the district who ironically was a Civil Rights Administrator. As a condition of renewal, the insurance company insisted that every employee be required to attend civil rights training.

An announcement came out at NHC on 3-8-06, declaring that attendance at civil rights training scheduled to begin April 3 was mandatory for all employees, both full and part-time. The Question and Answer document included the following:

I'm an adjunct or CE instructor – do I get paid for attending?

This training is mandatory for all employees and is a condition of employment. There will be no extra payment or stipend, and you will need to attend the training outside of your regularly scheduled class time.

Similar announcements were made at other campuses. According to the District, then, adjuncts and part-time employees who cannot attend during their work hours will not be compensated for their time. The union received reports of adjuncts being threatened with termination if they did not register to attend the training. Adjuncts are not contractually obligated to attend such meetings, and hourly part-time employees should not be compelled to attend without compensation. If employees are ordered to perform work, they are entitled to be paid. To do otherwise is inconsistent with employees' legal rights and entitlements. (For the record, the union recognizes the value of the training. The issue is the method of implementation).

When the announcement came out, the union immediately contacted DSTC. We received an indication that HR and the legal department would address the issue. Two weeks later, with the training six days away, no new announcement appeared. Again, we contacted DSTC and received an indication that announcement should be forthcoming, providing some alternative to the training for part-time employees. On Friday, March 31 by the close of business, no announcement appeared, so the union contacted the General Counsel for the District, protesting the mandatory requirement without compensation. We received a response that the District is "in the process of securing an on-line version of the training to accommodate adjunct and part-time staff." Remember, this communication occurred Friday after 5:00 p.m. before the mandatory training began on Monday---simply too late. As this newsletter goes to print, it is our understanding that adjuncts and part-timers still remained under the mandatory attendance beginning Monday, April 3. It's worth noting that even if an online version were available, compensation for two and a half hours of time is still appropriate.

If you are an adjunct faculty member or part-time employee who attended the civil rights training without compensation, contact the AFT. The union intends to pursue this issue. The most efficient method of contact will be to communicate via email: alan.hall@nhmcccd.edu.

Alan Hall





Caste System for Employees

In the December 2005 **Advocate**, the union noted that employees had been recently asked to review degree information for administrators and faculty for the 2006/2007 catalog, yet no mention was made of support and professional staff, many of whom have degrees. Based on NHMCCD's commitment to lifelong learning, it seems only appropriate that all employees should be recognized for academic achievement in the catalog. The union recommended that future catalogs include the credentials of all employees.

The AFT compliments the District for following the union's suggestion. On February 17, 2006, a new email from Human Resources went out to professional and support staff:

Every year, the academic catalog provides information on employees of the district. Currently all Administrator and Faculty members have their degrees listed in the catalog.

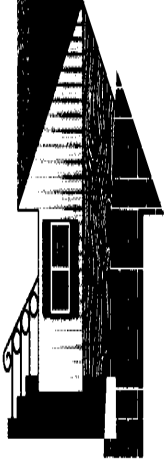
At the request of several colleges, we will publish ALL employee degrees in the catalog beginning this year.

This move is the right thing to do. After all, we are all employees of the district and dedicated to lifelong learning.

Alan Hall



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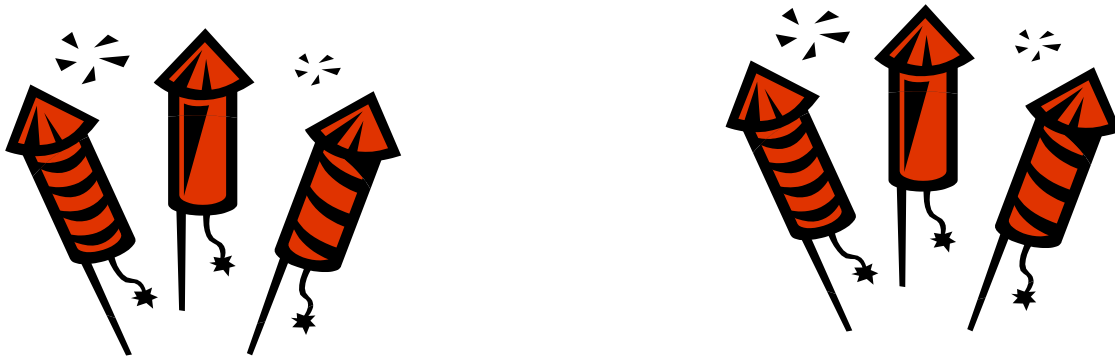
AFT PLUS

3/06

USE THIS AD IN MARCH



Congratulations to AFT Member Raul Reyes



The AFT routinely recognizes award recipients throughout the District. Somewhat tardily, we would like to congratulate Raul Reyes for his Student Choice Award, given in Spring, '05 by the Kingwood College Student Government Association. All accolades are appreciated by those of us who work in education, but when our students select us as winners, that's as good as it gets.





AFT

END-OF-YEAR CELEBRATION

All employees are invited to celebrate the end of another semester.

When: Friday, May 5

Where: Wolfies -25550 I-45 North on feeder 1/2 mile N. of Rayford/Sawdust (in the same strip center as Firestone Tire)
(281) 298-9653

Time: 4:00 p. m.—7:00 p. m.
Refreshments will be served

Hope to See You There!



Budget

Tight budgets remain a consistent theme across the college district. One result of the concern over budget is that several full-time faculty positions that were posted for 05/06 were cancelled, a real disappointment to several departments. Always curious about just how tight the budget really is, the AFT annually requests the amount of surplus funds returned to the district’s reserve account by each college. The following chart reflects the surplus returned at the end of 04/05 year.

CAMPUS	EXPENSES (OVER) UNDER BUDGET
NORTH HARRIS	(\$184,000)
KINGWOOD	\$315,000
TOMBALL	\$702,000
MONTGOMERY	\$289,000
CY-FAIR	\$408,000
TOTAL	\$1,530,000



Even with the deficit at NHC, the surplus from the other colleges totals \$1.53 M, enough to have funded several sorely needed faculty positions.

Growth in Adjunct Membership

In the October/November 2005 **Advocate**, the AFT recommended that adjunct salaries increase from the current \$36/hour to \$50/hour bringing NHMCCD adjunct salaries to \$2,400 for a 48 contact hour course which would match University of Houston Downtown. In the January /February 2006 issue, we advocated creating a special category for long term adjuncts who have taught for the district a minimum of three years and established themselves as good, reliable teachers. These adjuncts would be guaranteed a full adjunct load for the fall and spring with the understanding that they may also teach two courses in the summer. Such a system would improve adjunct retention and provide them a degree of security.

These two recommendations have generated discussion at all levels of the college district. The ideas certainly are popular among adjuncts. The union’s adjunct membership has skyrocketed. Let’s hope that the administration realizes it is time to address adjunct concerns.

Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$27.55
Full-time Professional Staff	\$24.00
Full-time Support Staff	\$20.40
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$10.00

Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full 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 page 8 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at www.aft-nhmccd.org.

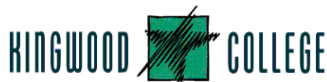


Campus Updates



At NHC, we continued our consultation with facilities staff over work rules. We advised a faculty member in a conflict with a dean. Lastly, we held mediation meetings between two union members and a supervisor.

Nick Oweyssi



The usual hustle and bustle following spring break has arrived. Things are really flying by at Kingwood as we near the end of the semester. We've had several new members and other inquiries concerning membership. We were happy to learn that the Board has decided to include the performing arts theatre for Kingwood in the bond issue proposal for May. Dr. Pickelman will be visiting the Kingwood faculty senate in April, and we are looking forward to having him on campus. Several members will be meeting with Alan Hall and discussing the full-time faculty overload procedure. There is some concern regarding how overloads are granted and when they are granted. We'll keep you posted.

Rich Almstedt



The western waters are currently in a pacific state. The winds are calm with just enough breeze to keep us headed to Port Finals. As of this log, all officers (administrators and faculty) and enlisted personnel (staff) appear to have knuckled down to tasks at hand, and no waves have risen to the point of cresting and needing attention. All life-boats have been accounted for and while the concerns of the last report (what do you mean you did not read it?) have settled somewhat, we are still looking into why a certain Lieutenant (full-time faculty member) was summarily demoted from Lt. Commander (department chair) back to Lieutenant for simply disagreeing with the Vice-Admiral (college president) over a particular appointment based on a Queen's Letter of Notice (letter of exception) allowing an assignment without meeting minimum Maritime requirements (SACS requirements). Both the seaman's union (AFT) and officers' association (Faculty Senate) are awaiting word from the Admiral's review board (District Office) regarding the Queen's Letter in hopes to better resolve the issue of the Lieutenant's demotion.

Till next we report, keep the decks clean, the water barrels full, and the ropes tight.

Richard Becker



Montgomery College is happy to report that we have several new members! Welcome to all of you! We continue to work with the administration to help resolve a staff issue. We are also inviting all members who teach to voice their ideas about what a classroom should have in it. Send them by e-mail to Julie Alber. Your responses will be compiled with the thoughts from other MC faculty and given to Dr. Butler. Here's a chance to be heard and make a difference! Finally, don't forget about our end of the semester celebration. Details are coming soon.

Julie Alber



It's been another busy month at Cy-Fair. If you missed our celebration on March 3, we're sorry; we'll have to have another very soon. The food was excellent, and the company was truly stellar.

We have worked on several issues in February and March, including contract changes, negotiations between employees and supervisors, and corrective actions. In most of these cases, we have helped employees and supervisors better communicate their concerns and needs. In two cases, the situations have been resolved wonderfully, leaving employee and supervisor very happy with the results. Two others are still pending, but the future looks hopeful. As always, we have been working behind the scenes to try and make Cy-Fair an even better place to work. In our meetings with administration, we bring up your concerns and address issues of which we are aware. This month, for example, we brought up issues as wide-ranging as faculty workloads, communication concerns, and employee retention. If you have issues you would like to see brought to these meetings, please let me know. I'm happy to raise your concerns and find the answers you seek. Speaking of answers, we have been busily at work hunting many down this month. We found out, for example, that according to our Policy Manual, part-time employees have only one means of receiving a raise as long as they remain in the same job, a Board-level vote to raise the rate of pay for that specific job. We will soon be following up on this issue for the sake of all our part-time employees, many of whom have not seen a raise in years.

It's my hope that, with your membership and assistance, we can continue to help Cy-Fair become the best possible place to work. Please remember: as members, you have the right to contact me before attending a meeting, writing a response, or signing a document. Let me know if I can help you!

Sandra Elliott



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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 articles to **Pat Gray, Editor**, NHC, ext. 5545 or e-mail: patsy.gray@nhmccd.edu, or **Heather Mitchell, Assistant Editor**, CFC, ext. 3254, or e-mail: heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu or submit to any of the other following officers:

Alan Hall, President	North Harris College	ACAD 217-G	ext.5544
Velma Trammell	North Harris College	WNSP 174	ext. 5612
Nick Oweyssi	North Harris College	ACAD 221-A	ext. 5547
Bob Locander	North Harris College	ACAD 270	ext. 5592
Allen Vogt	North Harris College	ACAD 264-C	ext. 5583
Vivian Brecher	North Harris College	LIBR 114	ext. 5403
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood College	FTC 100-G	ext. 1656
Laura Yates	Kingwood College	SFA 113-D	ext. 1414
Richard Becker	Tomball College	E-271-D	ext. 1835
Julie Alber	Montgomery College	SSC 205-A	ext. 7241
Cheri Riggs	Montgomery College	C 100-C	ext. 7370
Sandra Elliott	Cy-Fair College	HSC-200-K	ext. 5256

Membership Has Its Benefits

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 say that 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, it's there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. The AFT advocated effectively for the raise employees received this year. The annual membership dues are a small percentage of the raise. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

Alan Hall