



The Advocate

IT'S OUR FUTURE:

THE NOVEMBER BOARD/BOND ELECTION

Never, since the first election in 1972, when the citizens of Aldine, Spring, and Humble ISDs voted to form a junior college district that came to be named North Harris County Community College, **has an election been more important than the one upcoming on November 7th.** The District's initial 185 acres purchased from Turkey Creek Ranch Company for NHC has grown to cover 1,400 square miles (see map on page 6). The first set of students (613) was taught by 14 faculty members. Now we have 46,000 credit students and 15,000 CE students served by 1,851 full time employees. NHMCCD is the third largest community college in Texas and one of the fastest growing districts in the nation. We cannot let this process stop. We owe our allegiance to our students and to the communities who have chosen us to serve them.

Please take a deep, meditative breath of patience and examine carefully this unusually long Advocate article.

History

While most of us have been teaching, staffing offices and kitchens to serve students, and keeping our campuses clean, attractive, and secure, the Board and District administration have also been very busy. This short list may be old news to the long time veterans of NHMCCD, but newcomers may be interested. Under two chancellors and trustee boards with varying membership, we have added in spectacular fashion to our first 1972-building phase.
1981-82 New Caney and Tomball ISDs joined the college district

- 1984 Kingwood College opened
- 1988 Tomball College opened
- 1991 Conroe ISD joined NHMCCD
- 1992 District's name changed to NHMCCD
- 1992 Montgomery College opened
- 1996 Willis and Splendora ISDs voted to join the District
- 1998 The University Center opened as the first of its kind in Texas
- 1998 Citizens of Klein ISD voted to join NHMCCD
- 1999 NHC Child Development Lab School opened
- 2000 Cy-Fair and Magnolia joined NHMCCD
- 2002 Cy-Fair College opened at it Fairbanks Center
- 2003 Cy-Fair College opened its full campus

Obviously, very few leaders of our District have spent the last 30 years sitting on their hands and looking out the window (if they have a window). NHMCCD has always been a busy, progressive educational institution.

Board of Trustees Candidates

In the beginning of the election process, the AFT executive board put together a series of eight questions to ask each candidate in an attempt to make an informed decision about our endorsements. All of the incumbents responded: Martin Basaldua (position 1), David McIver (position 2), and Randy Bates (position 8). I spent the last weekend of September calling all the other candidates from my home, seeking interviews concerning our questions. I left messages with each candidate (with exception of two hang-ups from one

Election Edition

We're on the Web!
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It's Our Future cont'd

home number), explaining the purpose of my call, leaving my home phone, and asking for a callback. I heard from Hector Carreno (position 8), Charlotte L. Lampe (position 8), and Chris Daniel (position 2) but, thus far, have not had interviews with Clemente L. Ayala (position 1), David Holsey (position 1), J.B. Crowder Sr. (position 2), or Marvin Gil (position 2). When I tried to reach Fred Blanton (position 8), I was told by one of his assistants named John that I would have to email him with my request. I did so that same weekend, and Mr. Blanton replied by email that he would not be interviewed on the phone; I must send my questions by fax or email. I replied that the AFT has established a procedure for telephoning all the candidates, and we could not make an exception for him. Mr. Blanton replied that unless I followed his procedure, he refused to participate. I suggested that we had reached a procedural impasse but, fortunately, I have material he used to address the Board in September plus various media pieces by and about him, so his ideas are not left out. I have not heard from him since.

Here are all of the questions and the responses.

Question: Describe your education background and qualification for the office of college trustee.

Martin Basaldua: B.A., Trinity University, San Antonio; M.D University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

*I reside in the NHMCCD District and am a registered voter.

*I was elected NHMCCD Trustee and served 1991-1997.

*I was appointed by the Governor to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 1997 and served until 2004.

*I was appointed by the Governor to the Texas Legislature's Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education in 2004.

David McIver: B.S. in political science, University of Houston; MBA in finance, University of Houston.

*I have served on NHMCCD's Board of Trustees for six years, serving as Chairman for the past two years.

*I served on NHMCCD Foundation Board.

*I currently serve as President of the Tomball Rotary Club.

*I am on the board of the Klein ISD Education Foundation.

Randy Bates: B.S., Ohio State University; Juris

Doctorate, Texas Southern University.

*I have been a member of the NHMCCD Board from 1991 to the present.

*I served as Board chairman, 1995-1997.

Hector Carreno: B.A. political science, Northeast Illinois University.

*I have served on Boards for various American Stock Exchange Companies.

*The Chancellor is the Board's only hire; the rest should be left to the colleges.

Charlotte L. Lampe: some classes at a Minneapolis community college, no baccalaureate degree.

*I ran FOCUS (Families Organized for the Children's School) which helped get rid of year-round schooling at Cy-Fair ISD.

*My husband and I started an endowment at Cy-Fair College.

*I worked with mediation of disputes between attorneys for the Texas State Grievance Committee for five years.

*I am a passionate educational activist experienced in leadership.

Chris Daniel: B.S in mechanical engineering at University of Texas at Austin, some additional classes at Austin Community College.

*Currently a project manager at Grant Pride Co. where I basically handle multimillion dollar orders of pipe: establishing a budget, tracking cost and shipment orders, and getting the pipe placed most effectively in order to lower gasoline prices at the pump

*My sister attends Cy-Fair College.

*Early in my life a scoutmaster encouraged me to go into political activism, and in 2004, I was the youngest member of the Texas delegation to the Republican National Convention in New York, a very educational experience.

*I have been to every major college within NHMCCD.

Question: Should you be elected to office, list your top three agenda items for Board consideration in 2007.

Martin Basaldua:

*I would be an advocate for appropriate funding for the District.

*I will encourage policies and initiatives that address and respond to issues related to our rapid growth.

*I support our district in achieving the goals in "Closing the Gaps" which improve student participation and success.



It's Our Future cont'd

David S. McIver:

- *Management of growth in the District with diminished state support
- *Planning and implementation of use of bond proceeds if approved
- *Continue to develop the District's partnerships with ISDs, universities, businesses, economic development organizations and local government.

Randy Bates:

- *Minimizing economic impact to our faculty and staff due to shrinking financial support from the Texas Legislature
- *Setting policies and strategies that balance access with taxpayer concerns
- *Responding to community and workforce needs through partnerships.

Hector Carreno:

- *Change the policy of autonomy for each college's vendor contracts and merge the vendors for the entire district to save money
- *Reevaluate economics in non-teaching areas to insure their cost effectiveness.

Charlotte L. Lampe:

- *Reconnect the college to community
- *Evaluate programs and how we work within the college so we're doing the most with our academic students, those who plan to transfer to four-year institutions.
- *Spotlight HB 1403, which does not require legal citizen status for admissions into state colleges and universities. Illegal aliens can and do get into state institutions paying in-state tuitions.

Chris Daniel:

- *I don't believe education is a lot of buildings; I believe we should provide tools for students so they can succeed. For example, we should introduce study classes that show students what they must do to be good students. A budget, which focuses on building, simply opens the door for lobbying for construction.
- *The District needs more basic study programs and more extracurricular activities to enrich the student experience.
- *As a Republican I naturally want to limit increases in school property taxes without injuring students.
- *As a Board member I want to appoint a Chancellor who can do the job and manage the whole organization.

Question: **What is your long-term vision for the District over the next ten years?**

Martin Basaldua:

- *Successfully manage its growth and maintain its quality and positive image, thereby enhancing the students' ability

to succeed. It will continue to be an institution which is well respected by its peers

- *Be responsive to the student and the community and serve as an exemplary model to other college districts
- *Provide an environment in which its employees feel valued and supported
- *Have facilities and equipment which are state of the art.

David S. McIver:

- *A comprehensive college district that is providing an even greater positive impact on the community, both in terms of instruction offered and student access.

Randy Bates:

- *A District where our students receive a high quality education by a well-compensated faculty and staff
- *A District with a high credit rating
- *A District with low college taxes and tuition compared to similar community college districts
- *A District that provides its students with the technology to be competitive in the workforce
- *A District known for its responsible fiscal management of public resources
- *A District that has a Board of Trustee that works together for the public good, as opposed to infighting and hidden agendas.

Hector Carreno:

- *Create a premier District with a national reputation for excellence
- *Work to see that the faculty, staff, and administration are as good as Miami-Dade.

Charlotte L. Lampe:

- *See our community college system reflect the people in it, focus on what they want and need
- *Work for an enrichment of work force training
- *See NHMCCD become a shining example of what a community college district should be.

Chris Daniel

- *Expand some of the educational programs so students know how to study and then know how to apply the knowledge learned
- *Make sure we have a long term plan to create enough satellite locations to serve everyone
- *Survey our student population as to what they actually need. They are our customers.



It's Our Future cont'd

Question: **Identify one strength and one weakness you see within NHMCCD.**

Martin Basaldua:

*Strengths: The District is fiscally responsible and has a positive financial status.

The District has a committed and quality administration, faculty, and staff.

*Weakness: This is also a strength (increased tax base, increased enrollment, increased access), but our rapid growth has a potential to put a strain on our infrastructure and requires continued capacity development.

David McIver:

*Strengths: Outstanding quality of administration, staff, and faculty
Weakness: Lack of community awareness of all the outstanding accomplishments of the District and its employees.

Randy Bates:

*Our strength is the quality of our faculty.

*Our weakness is our dependency on state funding by the current Texas Legislature.

Hector Carreno:

*Our strength is the foundation laid out over the last 15 years and our very dedicated faculty.

*Our weakness is our very lax board members with no vision of the future.

Charlotte L. Lampe:

*Our strength is our availability to serve the student and the workforce and to provide cultural enrichment.

*Our weakness is the detachment of our leadership from the communities they serve.

Chris Daniel:

*Our strength is the momentum of expansion and the quality of education the District provides. We serve a wide range of the community.

*Our weakness is a Board which has become out of touch with the students and the communities they serve.

Question: **How do you propose to deal with the low salaries of classified employees and adjunct instructors in the District?**

Martin Basaldua:

*I support the ongoing review of all salaries, including the comparative analysis and benchmarking of salaries of all employees.

David McIver:

*The matter was addressed in the last budget which provided a raise for adjuncts.

Randy Bates:

*By increasing their salaries.

Hector Carreno:

[No answer because I somehow skipped this question and haven't been able to reach him again. It was my mistake, not Mr. Carreno's.] P. Gray

Charlotte L. Lampe:

*I would access the issue and examine it.

Chris Daniel

*I would take a look at the issue right now and see if there are other over funded areas from which I could pull salary increases. I want to make our professors comfortable.

Question: **As a trustee, how will you keep informed about what is happening in the classrooms, labs, and offices at the various colleges in the District?**

Martin Basaldua:

*I plan to occasionally visit and tour each campus as has been encouraged by the administration.

*I appreciate and value the Presidents', Vice Chancellors' and Faculty Senate reports given at each board meeting.

David McIver:

*Through presentations made at Trustee meetings, conversations with administration, staff, and faculty and reading The Advocate.

Randy Bates:

*By carefully listening to the Faculty Senate Presidents

*By maintaining an open door policy

*Through personal relationships with faculty and staff.

Hector Carreno:

*By visiting the campuses and talking with the students, faculty, staff, and administration.

Charlotte L. Lampe:

*I will go around and visit with college presidents, walk the halls, and talk to people. I hope to be visible and connected.

Chris Daniel:

*I love to drive so it will be easy to visit, drop by and see what's going on. I will be in touch with all the colleges in the District.

Question: **How do you feel about college employee unions and their role in the educational process?**

Martin Basaldua:

*A college employee union provides a valuable perspective to an institution's leadership and administration. It provides advocacy and information to its members.



It's Our Future cont'd

David McIver:

*I feel that an organization that works to benefit its members and improve the organization as a whole adds value.

Randy Bates:

*I support the union and believe it serves as a voice and advocate of those who would otherwise be unheard.

*The union is critical in keeping the Board informed of what is happening in the classrooms, labs, and offices at the various colleges in the District.

Hector Carreno:

*I have no problem with unions. Teachers are the number one asset of the institution

Charlotte L. Lampe:

*Unions are very effective, very articulate about their passion for teaching.

Chris Daniel:

*I have two opinions. Unions are necessary to protect teachers' rights, and I support unions that are doing their job correctly. If, however, the wrong people are in charge of the unions (as seen in many examples in industry), then they are all wrong.

Fred T. Blanton:

As explained in the 4th paragraph of this article, Fred Blanton refused to be interviewed over the phone; therefore, the material about him has been gathered from his web site Fred@FredBlanton.com, from his address to the Board of Trustees during their September meeting, and from some media outlets where he has spoken to the issues concerning him about NHMCCD. Here is an attempt to put his material in a format similar to what we've used with the other candidates.

Describe your education background and qualification for the office of college trustee.

This information was found on Mr. Blanton's website: Native Houstonian, Junior College graduate. Entrepreneur, Inventor. Whose residence and business is in the NHMCCD District.

What is your long-term vision for the District over the next ten years?

We do know that Mr. Blanton opposes the bond as demonstrated by quotes from newspaper articles. In the Humble Observer (9/6/06) he said: "I think a lot of items they have in it [the budget/bond proposal] are not necessary and are very expensive." In the same article he strongly objected to the new theater facility at Kingwood College, calling it "a political sugar cube." Further, "he accused the District of building what he called 'ivy league cathedrals in the backwoods' when

campuses could be based in ' storefronts along more noticeable and more heavily trafficked routes that would cost less.'" On a website, collegewatch.net, he suggests that no more money should be spent on North Harris College since it sits at the end of an airport runway, again implying that spending money on storefront operations would be a better use of funds.

Identify one strength and one weakness you see within NHMCCD.

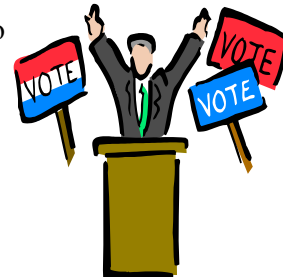
On his web site he speaks well of the services provided by community colleges in general.

Community colleges are known for the person attention they give students. They are designed to provide *low cost*, but high quality education including the certification programs within the student's community. [*sic*]

Community colleges provide a supportive environment for high school students making the transition to four year colleges. They are also the first institutions of higher learning the community turns to when technology and the demands of the workplace require employees to be trained for new careers....

Community Colleges are known for the dedication of their teachers, instructors, professors, adjunct professors and staff who offer personal direction and the encouragement to students.

The AFT has come across some of Mr. Blanton's campaign material that makes accusations against the district that we could assume he finds are weaknesses, including the Board of Trustees of misusing taxpayers' money because they use district credit cards to attend one national and one regional conference for trustees each year [Board development and training expenses for the trustees are not paid with tax dollars]. He also accuses the Board and administrator of lying about the bonds, claiming that the tax rate and student tuition will go up to pay for the bonds. [The District has not only kept its word on the past two bond referenda relative to the cost to the public, but the actual costs have been lower than projected.]





It's Our Future cont'd

How do you propose to deal with the low salaries of classified employees and adjunct instructors in the District?

Although Mr. Blanton has not addressed these two categories of employees, at the September Board meeting, he questioned the legitimacy of the 4% raise given to employees for the school year, 2006-07, saying, "This increase should not be given to those making over \$75,000 a year, a generous salary which is well above the average income for the people in this district." This remark seems to imply that no employee in the District should earn more than \$75,000, regardless of position, number of graduate degrees, or amount of responsibility.

As a trustee, how will you keep informed of what is happening in the classrooms, labs, and offices at the various colleges in the District?

We are only aware that Mr. Blanton does not regularly attend public board meetings. With the exception of his presentation at the September Board meeting, Mr. Blanton admits he has seldom attended the monthly Board meetings. In the Humble Observer he said, "It's been years. Some people have this belief that if you're not in church you don't believe. I don't think that. I don't know what I am going to gain from attending a meeting....I can see everything from the minutes."

How do you feel about college employee unions and their role in the educational process?

We don't know how he might have answered this question, but we certainly find his refusal to be interviewed by telephone as some indication of level of respect for the college employee union.

In addition, we were unable to reach these candidates, but on Mr. Blanton's web site he lists his slate of like minded candidates a David Holsey (position 1, J. B. Crowder, Sr. (position 2) and, of course, Fred T. Blanton (position 8), none of whom have replied to our requests for phone interviews.

AFT Endorsements

At a recent meeting the AFT Executive Committee endorsed the incumbents for the November Board of Trustees election:

Martin Basaldua, David McIver, and Randy Bates, all of whom are listed in the first slot for positions 1, 2, and 8 on the ballot.

The union has not always agreed with the decisions made by the Board, and employees may be a bit surprised to see all three incumbents endorsed. The truth is that the incumbents' interests and experience regarding NHMCCD are far more in line with that of the union than the interest and experience of the challengers. The incumbents all support the bond and have generally made good decisions that are in the best interests of all employees.

The Bond Election

One of the more problematic aspects regarding the bond election concerns the Board's truthful claim that the Bond can be passed with no tax increase. Often citizens confuse the "appraisal creep" put on homeowners by the county tax office with the tax rate set by public entities. Almost every year the tax office causes our homeowner taxes to go up through higher assessed valuation. However, NHMCCD's increase in total geographic size, which now includes 11 school districts, spreads the cost of the bond debt over a wider number of taxpayers. This allows the District to issue the bonds **with no District tax increase**. Showing concern for senior citizens who are often living on fixed incomes, the Board passed a resolution at the September which freezes the tax amount for citizens over 65 and the disabled. This means that the 2006 dollar amount collected for NHMCCD taxes will never go up regardless of the assessed value set by the county tax office.



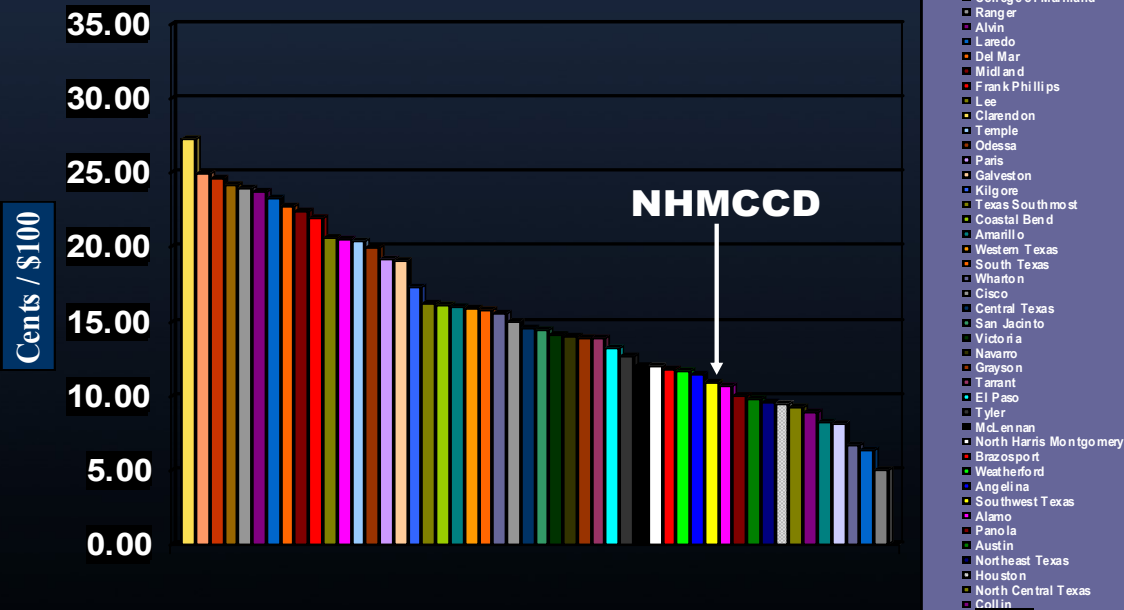
- Original District 1972.
- Growth since 1972.





It's Our Future cont'd

Total Tax Rates Texas Community Colleges



NHMCCD Prepares for Growth

Because of our massive growth in service area, NHMCCD has been able to cut the overall tax rate five times over the last 10 years, and our tax rate is lower today than it was 10 years ago. (Source: NHMCCD Prepares for Growth) In a graph showing the ranking of total tax rate for all of Texas' Community Colleges, NHMCCD ranks 34th out of 50, with tax rates lower than those of San Jacinto, Tarrant County, and El Paso. At 8.3% NHMCCD also has the 4th lowest percentage of total expenditure for administration of all Texas community colleges. (Source: Texas Association of Community Colleges). Our passage of the bond will give the District opportunities to provide space, personnel, and equipment for a student population projected to reach 60,230 by 2015.

Most of us connected with the District see the pressing need we have for these additional funds and for Board members with experience in handling growth and sound fiscal management.

The AFT urges all employees and their families and friends to support the District by voting for the incumbents and for the bond. Please don't give in to "ballot fatigue" and skip **our issues which are located at the very bottom of the ballot**. A pro-bond vote is a vote for better education in this area. It's our future on the line.

Pat Gray, editor



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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
Bruce Machart *	North Harris College	ACAD 217-A	ext. 5542
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
Robert McGehee *	Cy-Fair College	ART-113-H	ext. 3935

* Two of our officers recently left the District. The AFT's Executive Committee has approved the appointments of Bruce Machart and Robert McGehee to fill these positions. We are delighted at their willingness to serve and look forward to working with them.
P. Gray

**VOTE FOR "FIRST" NAME ON THE BALLOT
POSITIONS 1, 2, and 8**

Tuesday, November 7

Position 1: Martin **BASALDUA**

Position 8: Randy **BATES**

Position 2: David **McIVER**

College Bonds **"FOR"**

Early Voting:
Oct. 23 – Nov. 3

Endorsed by AFT
at NHMCCD