

AFT Presentation to the Board of Trustees, February 7, 2013

Good evening. I am John Burghduff representing the American Federation of Teachers.

On January 22, a troubled young man reacted with violence in the face of a minor conflict by shooting another young man on the North Harris campus, wounding two others including a Lone Star employee. When a school embraces the lofty mission of opening its doors to any citizen who seeks a better life, it accepts the reality that the issues and problems of the world at large will come through those doors as well. A great institution accepts those challenges with courage, does what it can to lift the estate of all those it serves and commits itself to the protection of everyone in its care.

On January 22, a watching nation saw that courage on the part of numerous Lone Star employees who responded quickly and effectively to the events that unfolded. Lone Star police officers responded to the scene within two minutes and took charge. Special thanks are due to Officers Bass, Gonzalez, Perkins, Gladden and Chavez, to Captain Taylor and to Chief Gregory for their professionalism. Faculty and students from the college's EMT program were quickly on the scene providing the aid they had so effectively learned to the wounded. Countless faculty and staff members did their part to shelter and then to evacuate our students in the most orderly way possible. The counseling staff expertly helped students and employees the next several days deal with the crisis they had experienced. The AFT recognizes and thanks all of these individuals for their grace and courage in time of danger.

The events of January 22 could have been more tragic and we are eternally grateful that they were not. As we return to our daily business, the AFT welcomes the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned even as we appreciate the individuals who helped so much. This is an auspicious time to plan trainings and drills for employees and students to help them know what to do in the event of a shooter on campus. This is a good time to examine our emergency communication process. Most of us across the system learned of the unfolding events through CNN, local news and concerned calls and texts from friends and family. Emails from the college arrived almost an hour after the event. Some received text alerts. Others did not. Finally, educating the whole person includes accepting the personal baggage our students bring with them. Our counseling staff has been cut drastically over the last 8 years on all campuses. Restoring those numbers would help us reach troubled students before crises develop and support others in a crisis event.

May God shield our college from violence in the future. May God bless those who strive to keep us safe in case it returns.